COMMENTARY

THE SOUTH AND THE LAW OF THE LAND

The Present Resistance and Its Prospects

C. VANN WOODWARD

THE annual fall maneuvers have left the school desegregation front very little altered in the Border States and the Upper South. Beyond the wavering front line, resistance remains to all outward appearances rigid and determined, save for the dubious enclave of North Carolina. Behind the line a few small pockets of resistance have been cleaned out, but the advance has been the smallest yet scored. In all, since the 1954 decision, 792 school districts have completed or at least begun the process of desegregation, but only twelve of those have been added since the last school year. That number includes some districts where the issue is still much in doubt. More than two thousand bi-racial districts still remain segregated. All but fifteen of the desegregated school districts lie in the Border States, none at all in the Lower South. The campaign had come very near grinding to a halt.

In the western theater of operations, moreover, the main campaign was not waged for new territory at all, but for the recapture of Little Rock. Won the previous fall with paratroops and with many prestige casualties, this strategic point had to be besieged anew. In the eastern theater gains were registered in Virginia, where a deep salient was driven into the left flank at Norfolk, another into the center at Charlottesville, and a shallow advance was effected on the right in Warren County. Some of these advances appear over-extended and still in jeopardy.

Activity of both defensive and offensive character centered in the courts, and litigation flew fast and thick through late summer and early fall. Nothing was heard of the classic complaint of "the law's delay." Special sessions were convened, dockets were cleared, justices burned the midnight oil, and decisions were handed down faster than opinions could be published—or even written. Segregationist law-makers and attorneys dashed from one calculated expedient to the next, only to find a Federal judge sternly blocking each supposed loophole. When one local Federal court yielded before the onslaught in Arkansas and granted a two and a half year postponement of desegregation orders, the Federal judiciary outdid itself with a speed more than deliberate in order to shore up the breach and repair the damage. As the words of the opinion were pro-

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THE historian C. VANN WOODWARD contributes his third article to COMMENTARY analyzing the desegregation crisis, following "The 'New Reconstruction' in the South" in our June 1956 issue and "The Great Civil Rights Debate" in October 1957. Professor Woodward is the author of a number of works on the history of the South, the most recent being *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955).

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nounced by the Chief Justice to settle that litigation, they were forwarded by telephone to Omaha, taken down by a stenographer, and rushed to a Court of Appeals that was simultaneously sitting upon the Little Rock "private school" plan. Whereupon the judges in Omaha issued a temporary restraining order and more than a hundred Federal marshals sprang into action in Little Rock to serve copies of the order the same evening.

Never before perhaps, or at least not for a century, has the Federal judiciary deliberately placed itself in a more exposed position during a political crisis. While the executive and legislative branches have remained in dugouts behind the lines, the judiciary has both led the offensive and withstood the brunt of attack on the firing line. In the last great struggle for equality, the one during the First Reconstruction, the courts took cover and retired from the fight. This time they not only laid down strategy but virtually assumed tactical command. Their leadership has been intrepid and unwavering. Those in search of hopeful signs in the crisis over desegregation would do well to make the most they can of the encouragement offered from this source.

THE high point in judicial firmness and boldness was reached in the Supreme Court opinion in the Little Rock case on September 29, the first major pronouncement on the subject the justices have rendered since May 1955. The Court emphasized the unanimity of the opinion by pointing out that although three new members had been added since the original decision, the Court still spoke with one mind on this matter. Veteran Supreme Court reporters confessed themselves moved by the drama of the occasion and by the earnestness and severity with which Chief Justice Earl Warren read the opinion. He began by pointing out that the case raised "questions of the highest importance to the maintenance of the Federal system of government," since it involved the defiance of Court orders by the governor and legislature of a state.

Specifically the Court was urged to uphold the suspension of the Little Rock plan of desegregation granted by a district judge who found that one year's trial of the plan had produced "chaos, bedlam, and turmoil" in Central High School, acts of violence against the Negro students, and "tension and unrest" among teachers, administrators, and parents.

Without going into the merits of this description of conditions at Central High, the Supreme Court opinion retraced the history of the efforts of the school board of Little Rock to put into effect a plan of desegregation and in doing so conceded the "entire good faith" of the board from beginning to end. The Court placed the blame for frustrating the board's plan wholly upon state officials and quoted the school board itself as saying: "The legislative, executive, and judicial departments of the state government opposed the desegregation of Little Rock schools by enacting laws, calling out troops, making statements vilifying Federal law and Federal courts, and failing to utilize state law enforcement agencies and judicial processes to maintain public peace."

In peremptory fashion the Court refused to uphold the suspension of the Little Rock school board's plan, declaring that "law and order are not here to be preserved by depriving the Negro children of their constitutional rights." Then in judicial rhetoric that expressed displeasure amounting to anger, the Court repudiated the implied claim of governor and legislature that they had no obligation to obey Federal court orders which rested "on this Court's considered interpretation of the United States Constitution." It reminded those officials that the Constitution was the "supreme law of the land," and recalled Marshall's dictum that "it is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is," and that to permit states to defy such law would be to make the Constitution "a solemn mockery."

Going further still to anticipate evasion, the Court declared that its decision could "neither be nullified openly or directly by state legislators or state executives or judi-

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cial officers, nor nullified indirectly by them through evasive schemes for segregation." As for so-called private school plans, the Court prohibited "any arrangement, management, funds, or property" of the state being used to support segregated schools.

It is impossible to see how the Court could have gone any further in the direction of clarity and firmness. There is little doubt that the decision was intended to speed up "deliberate speed" and stiffen the resolution of Federal district courts in the South and the courts of appeals. Insofar as judicial thunder could break the impasse, the Supreme Court opinion of September 29 would seem to have about exhausted the possibilities. In several quarters of the executive branch in Washington there were sighs of relief and a disposition to reflect that now it was only a matter of time. Secretary Arthur S. Fleming of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare felt sure that "the good judgment and common sense of the citizenry would result in the reopening of the schools." Attorney General William P. Rogers felt equally assured about the future. "It seems inconceivable," he said, "that a state or community would rather close its public schools than comply with the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States."

INCONCEIVABLE as it doubtless is to many, Southern intransigence did not wilt before the toughened Court position. The immediate response, at least, was a stiffer tone of defiance. "I will never open the public schools as integrated institutions," declared Governor Orval E. Faubus of Arkansas. And the somewhat less flamboyant Governor of Virginia, J. Lindsay Almond, Jr., merely took the trouble to qualify his own "never" with the adverb "voluntarily." Both states busied themselves with jerry-built plans for providing private schools while more than 16,000 school children waited.

The closing of those schools that were under court order to desegregate could only be regarded as a temporary expedient. It was obvious that if the courts were prepared to declare the exclusion of a few Negro children from a white school deprivation of equal protection of the law, they were more than prepared to declare unconstitutional for the same reason the exclusion of *all* the children, white as well as colored, so long as the rest of the public schools in a state remained open. The only apparent recourse the Court had left to the segregationists was to close all the public schools. The threat of some states to do just that cannot, unfortunately, be dismissed as mere bluster. It certainly can happen and in all probability will. South Carolina and Alabama have already put themselves in a position to do it. Instead of nearing its end, the resistance is only entering a more desperate phase.

Comfortable assurances about respect for the law being ingrained in the character of the South are misleading in this instance and lend a false color of optimism to the outlook. The fact is that a large proportion of the people have persuaded themselves, or allowed themselves to be persuaded, that the *Brown* decision against segregated schools and those decisions that follow from it are not properly to be regarded as the law of the land. There were a number of this persuasion from the start, of course, some of them irresponsible demagogues, but the number of converts to this point of view has grown alarmingly in the last year.

During 1958 the Southern attack on the Supreme Court received great comfort and encouragement from other parts of the country. The non-Southern critics of the Court were often not concerned with the segregation decisions, or said they were not, and some of them were not in sympathy with the Southern attitude on segregation. Not all of the attacks were made from the states'-rights point of view. The critics varied widely in learning, prestige, authority, and political leanings, and they were by no means all cranks, crackpots, or conservatives. They included, for example, Judge Learned Hand, whose Harvard lectures attacked the *Brown* decision frontally for lack of judicial restraint; Professor F. S. C. Northrop, who criticized the Court for inconsistency in the

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same decision; and Thurman Arnold, who confessed his concern at the sight of the justices "roaming the stormy field of economics, sociology, psychiatry, and anthropology, their black robes flapping in the winds of controversy." A predominantly conservative bar has been vocally critical for some time, and to the chorus from the conservative press even the Washington *Post* has lately added gentle remonstrances.

During the month before the opening of schools in the fall of 1958 two disaffected groups of great influence and authority simultaneously reached a climax of running assault upon the Supreme Court. These were the Conference of Chief Justices of State Supreme Courts in their annual meeting and the 85th Congress of the United States in the final weeks of its session. The chief justices, meeting in Pasadena, engaged in a full-dress debate on the adoption of a report of their committee on "Federal-State Relations as Affected by Judicial Decisions." The report championed the rights reserved to the states, severely criticized encroachments upon them by the Federal judiciary, and demanded that the Supreme Court exercise more judicial self-restraint. The school-segregation case was nominally avoided, but as one of the opponents of the report said, it was "quietly imbedded in the resolution you are asked to adopt." The report was adopted by the overwhelming majority of 38 to 8. Only the chief justices of California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Hawaii voted against it. The chief justices were not speaking for their courts, of course, but as Chief Justice Joseph Weintraub of New Jersey remarked: "Any man or group of men who choose to place themselves above the constituted authority as determined by the Supreme Court . . . is sure to find comfort . . . in the sweeping reflections upon the Supreme Court in this report."

In Congress the Southern opponents of the Court were joined by critics from other sections in an assault of explosive and startling violence against the Court's prerogatives, its philosophy, and its decisions of recent years. The House passed bills placing several restrictions upon the Court's powers, and the Senate was prevented from doing so only by a combination of luck, fatigue, and fast maneuvering. The Senate came within eight votes of passing an omnibus bill that would have nullified several Supreme Court decisions concerning state laws, civil rights, Congressional investigations, and Communists, and within one vote of prohibiting the Court from excluding states from any legislative area occupied by Congress unless Congress specifically agreed. In the opinion of Senator Wayne Morse these measures would have taken us "back to the Articles of Confederation." Altogether, the attack was the most bitter and violent the Court has sustained for a generation.

On top of these stimulating reinforcements from Congress and the state chief justices, the Southern resistance received an additional fillip from President Eisenhower about the same time. Asked to confirm a report that he had privately deplored the *Brown* decision and said that integration should proceed more slowly, the President declined to express approval or disapproval of any decision, but then added in his best Stengelese: "Now with respect to the other one, it might have been that I said something about slower, but I do believe we should—because I do say, as I said yesterday or last week, we have to have reason and sense and education and a lot of other developments that go hand in hand as this process—if this process is going to have any real acceptance in the United States."

GRASPING at any encouragement, the segregationists have dug in for a determined resistance. To understand their stubbornness one must realize that with at least half their minds they believe they are right. Since the struggle has centered in the courts and in the interpretation of the Constitution, they have concentrated their attention upon legalistic arguments. They are in this a part of a historic pattern, for like the old defenders of slavery they have wrapped themselves so heavily in legalistic defenses that they

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are blinded to realities—even the realities of the law itself.

North Carolina has proved a partial exception. There the segregationists started out on the path of massive resistance too, with all the legal paraphernalia and propaganda that was being simultaneously developed in sister states. But someone of influence evidently realized in time how moderate the expectations of the Supreme Court actually were, how much was left in the hands of local authority, and how small a concession it really took to appease the mildly troubled conscience of the North. In the fall of 1957 a tiny handful of Negro pupils were admitted to three schools in three cities, and ten of them actually attended throughout the year. The following fall the cause of integration was very deliberately speeded by the admission of one more Negro pupil. This made a grand total of eleven going to school with white children out of a total of some 322,000 Negro pupils in North Carolina.

It is true that there were difficulties: withdrawals, transfers, expulsions, fights. One Negro girl was shamefully insulted. The Ku Klux put on a demonstration. The Haliwa Indians absolutely balked at going to school with Negroes, and in order to maintain red supremacy they established a private school. Nevertheless, North Carolina was "integrated." It was only token integration, to be sure. Yet Northern opinion beamed approval and relaxed. North Carolina had complied, bowed to the Court's orders, respected the law of the land. Here was the model, the Lincolnian plan of the Second Reconstruction, the way out.

To the doctrinaire adherents of massive resistance, however, the North Carolina plan meant trifling with principle. And to them by this time everything was a matter of principle. Tokens were sordid compromise, whether tokens of seven, or eleven, or seventeen. It made no difference. In this private world of principle the Supreme Court decision became the end of racial integrity, mass mongrelization at bayonet's point. Words began to shift their significance and lose their common meaning. A "moderate" became a man who dared not open his mouth, an "extremist" one who favored eventual compliance with the moderate plan of desegregation. "Compliance" took on connotations of treason. The NAACP assumed the hideous mask of Mau Mau.

Letters from down South speak painfully of the price that is being paid. Lifetime friends have stopped speaking to each other. Men of good will are silent. Old contacts between the races on the old basis have been broken or strained. Few have been established on the new basis of equality. Harry Ashmore of the *Arkansas Gazette,* who has fought a good fight and a long one, wrote in September: "We, and those who shared our view across the South, have failed. There is no way, for the time being at least, to obtain such compliance [with the Court's orders in Little Rock] without doing serious and perhaps irreparable harm to the system of public education upon which all our children, colored no less than white, are dependent."

Faced with implacable opposition, the judicial plan of reconstruction appears destined to suffer frustration in large areas of the South. Either that or it may evoke token compliance that is evasion so thinly disguised as to amount to an affront to the dignity of the Court and a blow at the prestige of the Federal system. There is so far no professed intention of compliance in the Lower South, and there is open boasting of the fact. Civil disobedience and passive resistance to authority on grounds of principle are old traditions in America. They have a rather remarkable record of success, and they have not been employed exclusively on the side of the angels. If they have been effectively used to nullify the Fugitive Slave Act, they have also been used to nullify the Volstead Act and to make a mockery of treaties guaranteeing the rights of Indians that were backed by decisions of the Supreme Court. There is also the American tradition of great promises and noble experiments becoming semi-hoaxes after the

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fashion of the Homestead Act and the Eighteenth Amendment.

HAVING rejected judicial reconstruction, the South has so far escaped Congressional reconstruction. Congress has thus far cautiously refrained from intervening in the struggle against segregated schools. In fact, it has shown remarkably little effective interest in the whole fight for Negro rights. Time and again the Senate has tabled, emasculated, or talked to death bills of this kind that were placed before it. In the summer of 1957, however, Congress did pass a Civil Rights Act, the first since 1875. The bill provided, among other things, for Federal assistance to encourage and protect the registration of Negro voters. A determined fight by Southern Senators with Western help, however, defeated Part III, which Senator Richard Russell of Georgia denounced as "the heart of this bill." This part empowered the Attorney General at his own discretion to file suit for an injunction whenever he suspected interference with a whole range of unspecified civil rights, including presumably the right to go to an unsegregated school. Even liberal Senators who favored Part III backed away from the aggressive Southern accusation that they were trying to revive the dark Reconstruction days.

The secret of Congressional forbearance in the civil rights and desegregation struggle has been Southern influence in Congress, particularly in the Senate. That influence is not built into the Constitution. It rests upon a set of rules that can, with difficulty, be changed. Especially important are rules of seniority that make Southerners chairmen of the important committees in any Democratic Congress and the famous Rule XXII guaranteeing unlimited right of debate—and therefore the privilege of filibuster. Efforts to change these rules and reduce the power of the Southern delegations in Congress have repeatedly been made and repeatedly defeated. Senate Leader Lyndon Johnson and Speaker Sam Rayburn have been most ingenious in forestalling these efforts.

Southern influence has nevertheless been slipping of late. There are signs of further decline in the near future. Several Northern conservatives with whom the South has cooperated in the past are destined for retirement. A Democratic swing in the fall elections will bring in a lot of new members, many of them with liberal leanings, who are not obligated to the Texas leaders. A new state has been admitted to the Union and will be sending uncommitted congressmen to Washington. A new census is just around the corner and following that a re-apportionment of representatives that will diminish the South's relative strength in the House. Northern liberal members have already served notice that they will revive the fight to change the old rules, including Rule XXII, and they have promised also to dig up the Part III that was stricken from the Civil Rights Bill of 1957 and attempt to push it through over Southern opposition. Behind this latter design is a mounting impatience in the North at the South's defiance of court orders. Congressional reconstruction may well be on the way to supplement the moderate judicial reconstruction.

Historians have often attributed great political gifts to the South, gifts of sagacity and shrewdness in leadership. There have certainly been times in national history when this reputation has been deserved and when the country has relied heavily on the political genius of the region. But there have been other times when the political leaders of the South seemed blind to political realities, even blind to their own advantage. One such time was the tragic decade a century ago, which saw the crisis of secession, and again in the crisis of reconstruction. In the latter crisis they failed to use wisely the opportunity for moderate reconstruction provided by the presidential plan and as a consequence brought upon themselves a plan that was quite different. At such times the superstitious would say the gods were determined to destroy the South and had first made the people blind, if not mad. In the present instance there is still an opportunity, a brief reprieve, but the time is running out.

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THE NEW UNITED NATIONS

What It Can't and Can Do

HANS J. MORGENTHAU

IN TRYING to assess the contribution the United Nations makes today, and might be able to make tomorrow, to the settlement of international conflicts, it is indispensable to keep in mind that what we call the United Nations today is not what the United Nations started out to be. A sharp distinction must be drawn between the constitutional provisions of the Charter and the manner in which the agencies of the United Nations, under the pressure of unforeseen political circumstances, have actually performed their functions under the Charter. What we habitually do with regard to the government of the United States we must also do here: confront the provisions of the constitution with the realities of political practice. Nor does our task end here. For within this sphere of political practice we must also clearly distinguish between two phases in the development of the United Nations: one covering roughly the first decade of the organization's existence, the second starting in 1957. The United Nations of the first phase differs in its character and the functions it was able to perform from the United Nations of the second phase, as both differ from the United Nations envisaged by the text of the Charter.

The Charter intends the United Nations to be an international government by the great powers, which are identified as the five permanent members of the Security Council, i.e., China, France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Two major constitutional devices serve that purpose. Articles 10 to 14 establish the predominance of the Security Council over the General Assembly by limiting the latter to the making of recommendations in political matters. The General Assembly can debate, investigate, and recommend, but it cannot act. Even these functions are qualified by Article 12, which precludes the General Assembly from making even recommendations on matters that are on the agenda of the Security Council. This device enables the Security Council to control indirectly the political functions of the General Assembly. By simply putting a matter on its agenda, the Security Council can transform the General Assembly into a debating society without even the right to express its collective opinion on the matter.

The predominance of the Security Council having thus been established, the Charter proceeds to establish the predominance of the great powers within the Security Council. Article 27, paragraph 3, stipulates that "decisions of the Security Council . . . shall be made by an affirmative vote of seven members including the concurring votes of the permanent members." That is the famous veto provision. Dissent by one of the permanent members is sufficient to prevent action by the Security Council, even when all the other ten members are in favor of it. In other words, each of the permanent members has a veto. Thus the Charter predicates the United Nations upon the continuing unity of the permanent members of the Security Council. In the scheme of the Charter these five members are, as it were, the nucleus of a world federation, of a limited world government. It follows that with but one permanent member dissenting there can

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be no international government of the United Nations.

Actually, however, the international government of the United Nations is government by the great powers to a still greater degree than the foregoing analysis would indicate. Of the five permanent members of the Security Council only two, the United States and the Soviet Union, are really great powers. Great Britain and France are medium powers, China is only potentially a great power, and the government of Formosa, which occupies the permanent seat of China, represents the mere fragment of a nation. Under the present conditions of world politics, most members of the Security Council, the permanent members included, can be prevailed upon, if need be, to support a position taken by both the United States and the Soviet Union. The international government of the United Nations, stripped of its legal trimmings, then, is really the international government of the United States and the Soviet Union acting in unison. At best—if they are united—they can govern the rest of the world for the purpose of maintaining order and preventing war. At worst—if they are disunited—there will be no international government at all.

THIS constitutional scheme was built upon three political assumptions. First, the great powers, acting in unison, would deal with any threat to peace and security, regardless of its source. Second, their combined wisdom and strength would be sufficient to meet all such threats without resort to war. Third, no such threat would emanate from one of the great powers themselves. These assumptions have not stood the test of experience. The great powers have not been able to act in unison when their divergent interests were at stake, which is another way of saying that they have been able to act in unison only in rare and exceptional circumstances. And the main threat to the peace and security of the world emanates from the great powers themselves.

Thus the constitutional scheme of the Charter, defied by the political reality of the postwar world, has remained a dead letter. The conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union has prevented the United Nations from becoming the international government of the great powers which the Charter intended it to be. That conflict has paralyzed the Security Council—placing the United States and the Soviet Union generally on opposite sides of the issues voted on—and is responsible for the ascendancy of the General Assembly as the dominant political agency of the United Nations. These two complementary developments are graphically demonstrated by the quantitative decline of the activities of the Security Council and the corresponding increase of those of the General Assembly. The Security Council started out, in accordance with the intention of the Charter, by meeting more often and dealing with more political issues than the General Assembly. After reaching the pinnacle of its importance in 1947-1948, its activities declined steadily until the London *Economist* could say at the beginning of 1958, mixing its metaphors a bit: "The almost lifeless skeleton of the Council stands like a blasted rock in the background of the UN scene."

The General Assembly owes its present dominant position primarily to the inability of the Security Council to perform the task with which the Charter charges it: preserve peace and security. The impotence of the Security Council and the need for the General Assembly to take its place became dramatically obvious during the Korean war. With the Security Council paralyzed by the Russian veto, the General Assembly passed in November 1950 the "Uniting for Peace" resolution which established the General Assembly as the main United Nations agency for the preservation of peace and security.

In view of the text of the Charter, the General Assembly should never have been able to supersede the Security Council in any respect. For the Charter erects a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to any such usurpation by giving only the Security Council the power to make legally binding

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decisions and by allowing the General Assembly to do no more than recommend. The ever more marked inability of the Security Council to decide has brought about a subtle change in the relative powers of the two agencies. This change has endowed the recommendations of the General Assembly with an authority akin to that of a legally binding decision. The overwhelming majority of the members of the United Nations have felt that the United Nations ought to take action with regard to certain matters and that, in the absence of a Security Council able to act, the General Assembly ought to act in the manner the Security Council would have acted were it able to do so. Thus, while technically speaking the General Assembly can only recommend, a substantial majority of the members have shown a tendency to act upon these recommendations as though they were legally binding decisions.

This transformation of the General Assembly into the politically dominant agency of the United Nations was possible only because at least two-thirds of the member nations favored it. If at least a two-thirds majority had not voted for the recommendations which were submitted to the General Assembly during the last decade, that transformation would not have taken place. This majority is the instrument which has brought this transformation into being, which gives the transformation life as long as it supports it, and which determines its content and its strength. And it is upon the composition of that majority that the character of the transformation depends.

The composition of the majority supporting the recommendations of the General Assembly has undergone a drastic change with the admission of twenty new members in 1955-56. This date constitutes a turning point in the history of the United Nations, closing one phase and ushering in a new one. It can even be said that the United Nations which existed before that date was a different instrument of international government from the United Nations existing today, capable of performing different functions from those which the present United Nations is able to perform. The transformation the United Nations has undergone has not stopped with the shifting of the center of political decision from the Security Council to the General Assembly. It has created within the General Assembly itself two different types of international organization, built upon two different kinds of majorities.

The majority which carried the recommendations of the General Assembly until the end of 1956 had as its nucleus the United States, the nations of Western Europe, most members of the British Commonwealth, and the Latin American nations, amounting to thirty-nine votes. Around this nucleus other nations grouped themselves in ever changing configurations, sometimes voting with the majority, sometimes against it, sometimes abstaining. Permanently excluded from it was the Soviet bloc, numbering five votes. Not only was this new United Nations an international government conducted without the participation of the Soviet bloc, it was also an international government which opposed the Soviet bloc as the latter opposed it. It owed its very existence, and found its main political and military purpose, in the opposition it offered to the Soviet bloc. In its purpose it could well be called a grand alliance directed against the Soviet bloc.

The increase in the membership of the United Nations from the original fifty to the present eighty-one members has drastically changed the distribution of voting power in the General Assembly and, with it, the political functions the United Nations is able to perform through the General Assembly. The increase in membership has led to three politically significant changes in the distribution of votes. The Western bloc, counting forty-three votes, has lost its ability to marshal regularly a two-thirds majority in support of resolutions directed against the Soviet bloc. While it is still able to gain this support sporadically, as for instance in the resolutions dealing with conditions in Hungary, the nations which can be counted upon to support its policies with regularity

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number more than one-third but less than two-thirds of the total membership. In consequence, the best the United States can hope for with any degree of regularity is to impose a veto upon objectionable resolutions by withholding the vote of its supporters from them. The United States can still perform a negative task: prevent the use of the United Nations against its interests. But it can no longer count upon using the United Nations for the positive task of promoting its interests.

WHILE the influence of the United States within the United Nations has thus drastically declined, that of the Soviet bloc, amounting to nine votes, has increased. During the first postwar decade, the Soviet Union was in a virtually hopeless minority, both in the Security Council and the General Assembly. In the Security Council it has been able, as we have seen, to protect itself against the consequences of being regularly outvoted through the use of the veto. In the General Assembly it was unable as a rule to prevent resolutions objectionable to it from passing because it could count upon less than one-third of the members to support its position. Today, the Soviet Union has a good chance—although not yet as good a chance as has the United States—to add to the votes of the members of its bloc the votes of a number of other nations, which votes together would amount to more than one-third of the membership and would thus place the Soviet Union in a position to prevent resolutions objectionable to it from being passed.

This shift in the distribution of voting strength results from the fact that the massive increase in the membership of the United Nations primarily benefited nations belonging to the so-called Afro-Asian bloc. The Afro-Asian bloc, numbering twenty-nine members, comprises more than one-third of the membership of the United Nations. Thus, if it were to vote in unison, it could both exercise a veto on any resolution adverse to its interests or else, by joining either the American or the Soviet bloc, become the core of a working two-thirds majority. In reality, however, the Afro-Asian bloc has but rarely voted as a unit; its vote has typically been split, with some members voting with the American, others with the Soviet bloc, and a very considerable number abstaining. Consequently, as concerns the ability of the United Nations to function politically through the General Assembly, the Afro-Asian bloc has thus far performed a negative function. By splintering its vote between them, it has strengthened the power of the American and Soviet blocs to oppose the will of a simple majority with the veto of more than one-third of the membership. As a result, the General Assembly has proven itself incapable of passing resolutions calling for any action more decisive than investigations, good offices, and reports by the Secretary General, his representatives, or a committee of the General Assembly.

The sole exception is the resolution of February 3, 1957, establishing a United Nations emergency force to patrol the borders of the Gaza strip and the coast line adjacent to the straits of Tiran. Yet this action was due to a unique convergence of circumstances: the United States voting with the Soviet Union against its principal allies on a political issue, the general indifference if not hostility in the United Nations to the interests of Israel, the need of Egypt to recover from the rout of the Sinai campaign. Each of these positions commanded wide voting support, and their convergence assured overwhelming support for the action taken. In addition, the issue with which the General Assembly had to deal—mitigation of the danger of war at the two most sensitive spots of the Israeli-Egyptian frontier—was susceptible to the limited action taken.

None of the issues that have come before the General Assembly since show either that convergence of positions supporting for different reasons the same action, or that susceptibility to a limited action, the only kind which the United Nations is capable of taking. Consequently, the General Assembly has had to limit itself to passing declaratory resolutions which at best convey the appear-

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ance of action while being devoid of substance. That appearance has been supplied by the office of the Secretary General.

The Charter intends the Secretary General to be "the chief administrative officer of the organization." He "may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security." And he "shall perform such other functions as are entrusted to him by (the) organs" of the United Nations. It is from this provision of the Charter that the new functions of the Secretary General as the apparent chief political agent of the United Nations derive.

These new functions are intimately related to the impotence of the General Assembly, as the responsibility for action which the General Assembly has taken on is intimately related to the impotence of the Security Council. And one can go one step further and say that the responsibility for the settlement of political issues with which the United Nations as a whole has been burdened is a by-product of the inability of the nations directly concerned, especially the great powers, to settle outstanding political issues among themselves. The nations directly concerned and, more particularly, the great powers, have been unable to agree on a political settlement for the Middle East. So they charge the United Nations with finding a settlement. The members of the General Assembly, taking the place of the paralyzed Security Council, are no more able to agree on a settlement collectively than they were when acting as individual nations. So they charge the Secretary General with finding a solution. Yet the result is bound to be not action delegated, but inaction concealed.

PARTIES to a political conflict can be induced by outsiders to agree on a peaceful settlement by four methods, employed alternately or simultaneously. They can be threatened with disadvantages expected to outweigh the advantages to be gained from continuing the conflict; they can be promised advantages greater than those to be expected from seeing the conflict through to a successful conclusion; they can be persuaded by rational arguments pointing to the advantages and disadvantages to be expected and to the intentions and capabilities of the other side and of interested third parties; they can be helped in taking the last small step toward the consummation of a settlement already achieved in substance through the elaboration of a face-saving and technically satisfactory formula. Of these four devices, the first two tower in importance over the two others, which perform essentially subsidiary functions. It is the measure of the weakness of the Secretary General's position as a political agent that he is almost completely deprived of the two most potent instruments of conciliation, threat and promise, and limited to the use of rational persuasion and formulation of agreements already substantially attained.

The weakness of the General Assembly, as presently composed, then, is reflected in the weakness of the Secretary General. Both can talk, explain, and formulate; but neither can at present put a hand on that lever of threats and promises which is the very soul of political action. The new eminence of the Secretary General in terms of sheer activity is but a function of the General Assembly's embarrassment at being called upon to act without being able to. And that call to action, addressed to the General Assembly, is in turn but the great powers' cry of despair at being unable to settle among themselves issues which, as long as they remain unsettled, carry within themselves the threat of war. Thus the travels of Mr. Hammarskjöld, like the resolutions of the General Assembly, are not so much harbingers of recovery, let alone a cure for the disease, as symptoms of its intractability. Yet they can also have the effect of sedatives for jangled nerves and of medication which prevents existing wounds from opening still wider. This is indeed the contribution which the United Nations is at present able to make to the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

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The General Assembly is, at any rate for the time being, in the position in which the Security Council found itself from the very beginning: it is unable to act for the reason that the majority required by the Charter is lacking. Yet while the Security Council was paralyzed from the outset by the foreseeable and almost automatic use of the veto by the Soviet Union, the paralysis of the General Assembly has been the result of a dynamic process which can be broken down into three phases: disintegration of the two-thirds majority led by the United States; the vain attempt by the two superpowers to fashion a two-thirds majority in support of their respective policies; the attempt by the two superpowers to minimize the voting support of the other side. This continual search for votes, or at least abstentions, has become one of the main preoccupations of the great powers in the General Assembly. Out of it, a new diplomatic procedure has developed, the significance of which is twofold. It forces the great powers to defer, at least in the formulation of their policies, to the preferences of the small member nations and thereby blunts the sharp edges of international conflict. It provides the nations concerned with an opportunity to shift the apparent responsibility for unpleasant decisions to the United Nations and thereby acts as a face-saving and shock-absorbing device.

The powerful nation which needs for the successful execution of its policies the support of small nations can follow one of two courses of action. It can resort to the traditional method of diplomacy and bring its superior power directly to bear upon the weaker nations. In this way dependencies are established and alliances are formed. However, a powerful nation which tries to gain support for its policies through the United Nations General Assembly cannot rely upon its superior power alone. Superior power avails it nothing if it is unable to attract the number of votes sufficient for the purposes of its policy. Thus it must pursue a different course of action, which is determined by the procedures of the General Assembly. These procedures and the new United Nations diplomacy which has developed from them tend to diminish the distinction between great and small nations, since all of them have but one vote.

If a great power had only the task of fashioning an alliance with the techniques of traditional diplomacy, it would select the members of the alliance primarily according to the power they could add to it. Yet the task of the new United Nations diplomacy is not so much to build an alliance with a maximum of political and military power, as to form a majority with a maximum of voting strength. In the General Assembly, India's vote counts for as much as Nicaragua's, and Yemen's is as valuable as Great Britain's. The most powerful member of an alliance can afford to disregard the preferences of small nations whose power counts for nothing, making concessions only to those whose power counts. The most powerful member of a majority in the process of formation must heed the wishes of even the weakest nation whose vote is needed.

Of course, the power of the big nation is still felt, as is the weakness of the small one. Yet while power and weakness still count in the new United Nations diplomacy, they do not count for as much as in traditional diplomatic methods. Here lies the important distinction between the techniques of traditional and United Nations diplomacy: the latter is compelled to persuade, where the former could afford not to care. Thus a great power must present the issues to be voted on in terms acceptable to the members whose votes are needed. This necessity involves a dual transformation of the measure from what it would be were it to serve exclusively the purposes of the great power.

First of all, the measure must be presented in language reflecting the common interests of the prospective members of the two-thirds majority, rather than the interests of a particular nation or more limited group of nations. This linguistic transformation may frequently amount to no more than ideological justification and rationalization

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of national policies in terms of supranational ones. Yet the constant use of a certain terminology, not only for purposes of propaganda but in the give and take of political transactions, may well exert a subtle influence upon the substance of the transactions themselves. For the language constantly used will create in the participants to the transaction expectations to which the transaction somehow must conform or from which, at the very least, it cannot completely deviate. Thus a foreign policy with which a certain nation or limited group of nations is completely identified, and for which the broad support of two-thirds of the General Assembly is sought, may well undergo a subtle change if, for the purpose of gaining such broad support, it is constantly presented in supranational terms. Such a change would hardly ever run counter to the objectives and methods envisaged by the original national policy. Yet it may well result in the blunting of the sharp edges of a national policy, its retreat from an advanced position, and its reformulation and adaptation in the light of the supranational principles embodied in the language of the resolution.

The same result will be directly and almost inevitably achieved in the course of the negotiations by which a two-thirds majority in support of the resolution is formed. The divergence of interests, capabilities, and points of view among the members whose support is sought necessitates a search for a common denominator, which is bound to be below the maximum desired by the originator of the national policy. How far below that maximum the measure enacted by the General Assembly is going to be will depend in part upon the skill with which different nations make use of the new methods of United Nations diplomacy. In large measure, however, the distribution of material power between the nations seeking support for a policy and the nations whose support is sought will decide the extent to which the former must give way in order to gain that support. For the nations that can afford to do so will use their power as a lever by which to gain concessions and avoid making them. It is here that old and new diplomacy merge.

YET the United Nations presents two great inducements for making concessions, at least in the formulation of policies: it is at present powerless to act, and it speaks with a voice which pretends and appears to be, and within certain limits actually is, different from that of the great powers. Thus nations in conflict with each other can afford to do vis-à-vis the United Nations what they think they cannot afford to do in their relations with each other: make concessions in the formulation, if not the substance, of their policies without fear of losing face. This is particularly so if the face-saving formula is proposed by a "neutral" nation or group of nations. For then the parties to the dispute appear to make concessions not to each other, but to the majority of the General Assembly in whose name the "neutral" nation appears to speak. Conversely, the refusal to make concessions appears in the circumstances not so much as defense of one's own rightful position against the enemy, but rather as defiance of the "political voice of mankind itself." However intangible and imponderable these influences are which the General Assembly is able to bring to bear by virtue of its very existence as an operating agency, these influences exist and are being taken into account by the nations concerned.

The Secretary General, as designer of the face-saving formula, personifies both the "neutral" nations and the "political voice of mankind" and partakes of the influences they exert in the General Assembly. However, he has at his disposal two more devices which enable him under favorable circumstances to mitigate international conflicts. One is a function of his office and the sole means of real pressure at his disposal. He can warn a reluctant party that he will bring the situation to the attention of the General Assembly as a threat to international peace and security, and in terms which place the blame where the Secretary General thinks it belongs. By doing this, he threatens to bring

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those influences into motion which enable the General Assembly to play the mediating and mitigating role to which we have referred.

The other instrument at the disposal of the Secretary General is a function of his personality and lies purely in the realm of persuasion. Mr. Hammarskjöld's tenure of office shows impressively how dependent the peace-promoting functions of the Secretary General are upon the intellectual and moral qualities of the holder of that office. Only a man of Mr. Hammarskjöld's personality could have tried to do what he has tried to do in this respect, and have achieved what he has achieved.

In view of the magnitude of the unsettled issues, it is fair to say that what he has achieved is little enough, and this judgment must be extended to the United Nations as a whole. But in view of the enormity of the consequences with which these unsettled issues threaten not only individual nations but civilization itself, it must also be said that the little that has been achieved by the United Nations is better than nothing.

THE CHILD

EMIL BOYSON

On my way through the park
I saw you playing one second.
Watching you, your father
Reads "Family Times of Zion."
(Berlin, 1933; it's still allowed
for Jews
To sit on a bench in a park;
We're humane; Der Führer wishes it.
But it won't be much longer.)
You get up from the sandpile,
And tear over to him,
The black curls jumping on your head,
Calling out, Father! Father!
And dark eyes burn with gayness
And all the charm of a foreign race.

It won't be much longer.
Take off your clothes! (Economical,
Der Führer wishes it)
Throw yourself in the big fire-oven!
Der Führer wishes it!

Little bloom of a strange race,
I am the only person on the entire earth
Who even knows that you were alive.
They tossed your father in the fire-oven,
Then the uncles and cousins and aunts
And all who were remotely related.
Those who murdered you, you have slipped
their mind.
That's all I have to say.

Emil Boyson, considered widely to be Norway's best living poet, won the Norwegian Critics' Prize in 1957 for his book of poems that year. The translator of this example of his work is Robert Bly, himself a poet whose verse is included in *New Poets of England and America* (Meridian).

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I SELL MY HOUSE

One Man's Experience with Suburban Segregation

ALAN WOOD

UNLIKE most of the families who bought a "resale" in North Shore Community Homes, we had no relatives living there. But we did have friends, and when they asked us out for dinner one evening we accepted their invitation with interest. We were curious to see this fabulous Long Island development we had heard so much about, laid out for "planned living" on what had once been a vast potato field. The NSCH people had smartly kept abreast of the times: their houses were modern, glass transparencied split-levels ("Tomorrow's Living Today"), with all the latest utilities and a string of "features" (one of them—a picture window which at the touch of a button rolled up to become a floor-to-ceiling screened porch—had been prominently written up in the home magazines). Winding streets cut down speedsters, there were ample playground and recreational facilities, and the homes were pivoted on their oversize plots in an attempt to disguise the fact that all 483 houses had the identical floor plan.

It was a heroic try, but I was not fooled; to my eyes NSCH looked exactly like what it was—a huge housing development flung across a potato patch. My wife saw it differently, however. "How can you possibly not like it? Look how practical it is! Look how much house for the money." My friends basked in her enthusiasm ("You know, she's right, Alan; if you find one available, you'd be smart to grab it"), and I got the impression we were being pressured into throwing in our lot with the happy NSC suburbanites.

After dinner, our hosts proposed that we sample one of the attractions of life in the "community" (their unvarying terminology for NSCH), a talk by a nationally syndicated political analyst, part of a lecture series run by the township. Tonight's lecture was to be held only a short distance away, in the temple situated in the heart of the development.

As we got out of the car in the enormous parking lot behind the modernistic temple (which looked like an outsize Howard Johnson's, complete to cupola on top), someone ran up to my wife and tugged at her arm.

"What on earth are you doing here?"

"Mary O'Connell! What are you. . . ."

It turned out that my wife and Mary had gone to college together in New England. As we all went into the temple, I managed to pull my wife aside.

"What's she doing at the temple?"

My wife gave me one of those looks. "Weren't you paying attention at dinner? This is a public lecture series. The temple is just providing its facilities."

Inside, the temple was airy and shimmered with glass, and I had plenty of occasion to look around because the evening did not get under way for nearly a half hour. Finally the chairman signaled the organist and we rose to the introduction of the "Star Spangled Banner." When the national anthem was over, I started to sit down. Mary O'Connell flashed me a sympathetic look. The organist was playing another selection, and I heard a sudden swell of singing around me. I don't know who was more embarrassed, Mary or I, as I watched her mouth the words, in a conscientious effort to join in the community sing of "Hatikvah."

A few week ends later I was hardly surprised to find myself back in NSCH, driv-

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THE problem of segregation in modern America is, also, sometimes a problem of self-segregation, the theme of the present article. ALAN WOOD is the pseudonym of an editor and author with special interest in contemporary Jewish affairs.

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ing around its serpentine streets. A real estate broker by my side chanted the litany: "It's really the last word in modern conveniences. . . . Where else can you get so much house for the money? (Even though in two and a half years it had jumped $3,000 over its original price.) It's a once-in-a-lifetime buy. Besides," he said as a clincher, "you've got your own temple right in the community."

It was the casualness rather than the remark itself which startled me. "Wood" isn't a Jewish name, and neither my wife nor I looks Jewish. Obviously we knew there was a neighborhood temple, but we had not mentioned our own religious affiliation to him. Nevertheless, the agent had hit a responsive chord. We had been house-hunting in Connecticut, Westchester, Long Island, and New Jersey. We had found the best values in New Jersey, and one day we happened to wind up in a particularly lovely section within reasonable distance of New York. I asked a broker to show us around and we were already on our way when I asked him if there were any other Jewish families in the area. The broker hesitated for a long moment and then brightened. "Well, there's a nice merchant a few blocks away, and of course there's the dentist." Then delivering what I gather he considered a master stroke, he added: "And you'd be just like pioneers!"

IT APPEARED we'd be in no danger of trailblazing in NSCH, after we had spent a very pleasant half hour with the very pleasant local rabbi. Or, to be accurate, one of the *two* local rabbis, for as the old joke goes about the Jew on the desert island who builds two *shuls*—one he wouldn't be caught dead in—the community had two rabbis, one for the Conservatives and one for the Liberal/Reform. Such an abundance of spiritual leadership interested me, and I asked whether the community's make-up was such that it could support two rabbis. NSC had been 50-50 to begin with, the rabbi said, but perhaps because of the temple in its midst it had become approximately 60 per cent Jewish.

I was to discover that was the underestimate of the year, but I had no reason to challenge the figure at the moment, having more immediate concerns, such as how to face the derision of my friends from the City when they learned I had moved to Candytuft Lane. It was small consolation that mine was hardly worse than the rest of the addresses in the "flower section" (Anemone Lane, Alyssum Drive, Cornflower Road) and that strict adherence to accuracy could have doomed us to "Spud Drive" or "Nematode Lane." I was discussing this appalling situation with a neighbor a few houses away—a "resale" too—when I happened to inquire why his original owner had moved. "He was a Gentile," my neighbor said. It seemed to him to constitute full and sufficient explanation.

Some time later I had occasion to meet this Gentile, whose taste in landscaping I had long admired, and I asked him why, if he loved the community as much as he professed, he had left. He was quite frank about it. He was perfectly happy to live in a mixed neighborhood, he said, until one day his wife gave a birthday party for his daughter and asked all the neighbors' children to come. "Of the thirty-two children invited, thirty were Jewish," he said. "Somehow that didn't seem a natural environment in which to raise my children."

I could hardly blame him, although I myself had never felt too many effects of this imbalance. True, the local holiday lighting effects appeared on Chanukah rather than Christmas, and everyone stayed home on High Holy Days. The local newspaper, once a staunch bastion of rock-ribbed Republicanism, now found itself having to print complaining letters concerning the local columnist's tasteless anti-Democratic jokes; and its pages seemed more and more heavily weighted with Hadassah and Sisterhood doings. But that hardly affected us; by now the neighborhood had settled into a sort of stability, and people lived and let live. Kaffee klatches had disappeared, the block party had become a thing of the past, and even the annual musical production, featuring the

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North Shorenuffs, had had to cancel its performance because of a lack of stage hands and volunteer actors (there were always enough actresses). Although the community was hardly homogeneous, in one respect it had assumed its own brand of conformity: whenever a house was sold it was to Jews, and across our street all three Gentile families had moved away.

THAT was the situation, three years after we had moved into North Shore Community Homes, when we bought another house elsewhere which was better suited to the needs of our growing family. We dared take such a foolhardy step without having found a purchaser for our own home because in the five and a half years of the NSCH's existence it had become one of the most sought-after communities on the North Shore. Homes were sold over a week end and then directly to principals, without brokers. Confident it would be only a question of accepting the highest bidder, we ran an ad in the Saturday and Sunday papers: CHOICE NSCH SPLIT FOR SALE. PRINC ONLY!

We were deluged with telephone calls. All week end people marched through our rooms, peered into our closets, thumped our walls. Time and again they cut off my modest sales talk. "We know the house," they said, and proved it by reeling off our type of model, an accurate tabulation of the improvements we had made, the adaptability of our house to their particular requirements. By Sunday night we were giddy, exhausted, and optimistic. It was only when Wednesday came along that we realized no one had made us an offer.

A little less ebullient, we placed the ad for the next week end. Again an invasion, although somewhat less intensive than the first week; again no offers. The third week end it rained, and our confidence began to wane slightly. Still, it had only been three weeks—what did we expect? But we considerably expanded our ad before listing it again, and then listened apprehensively for the week-end weather reports. They were hardly encouraging: thunderstorms were predicted for Saturday, with scattered showers Sunday.

It was with no little relief, therefore, that I answered the doorbell on Saturday morning and assured a Mr. Wilson we would be happy to show him the house. Mr. Wilson, his beautiful wife, and two lovely children walked through the rooms carefully. Then they inspected the grounds. Then they asked to see the house again, this time going up into the attic, down into the basement and playroom, inspecting the kitchen equipment, and finally the grounds again. In the course of all this, they told me that Mr. Wilson had been transferred East by his company, and that they were anxious to get settled as soon as possible. Although they were strangers to the North Shore of Long Island, they had seen nothing that appealed to them nearly as much as our house.

I had heard this before, so I was unprepared for the phone call early Sunday morning. Had we sold the house? Mr. Wilson asked anxiously, because if not he wanted to buy it. When we got down to terms, they couldn't have been better. He was offering close to the asking price, he had the cash differential between our figure and the existing mortgage, he wanted to move in as fast as we wanted to move out. Still, it was only Sunday morning and—who knew?—maybe the ad would pull someone who would offer us even more. I asked Mr. Wilson to talk to his bank and call me Monday evening. I hung up the phone and told my wife. She looked at me.

"What are you going to do?" she said.

"What do you mean, *do*?"

"I mean Mr. and Mrs. Wilson are Christians," she said. "Are you going to tell them about the neighborhood?"

I have always considered myself an ethical person. For some reason, perhaps because it so strongly involved religious considerations, I chose to regard this as an ethical question. But ethics were something you discussed abstractly at study groups, temple breakfasts, or Great Books (my one "interfaith" activity, since it was the only place I could meet local Christians). How

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could ethics resolve my peculiar dilemma?

What made it worse was that, by now, I badly wanted to sell the house. Far from being sure it would be only a question of accepting the highest bidder, I foresaw not only a lot of lost week ends but the very real possibility of a last-minute squeeze which would shave thousands off my price. I had a bid in hand, but was afraid that if I described the community the Wilsons would fly away. So, for the first time since my wife and I had visited him before moving to NSCH, I phoned the rabbi for a professional visit. He was out of town.

My wife in the meanwhile was going through the NSC phone book. To our pleasant surprise, quite a few non-Jewish families appeared to be still living in the community. Unfortunately none in our particular area; our section was solidly Jewish. I was beginning to realize the irony of our situation. Discrimination worked in reverse in NSCH. I stood to lose a sale because my customer was a Gentile.

I NEEDED someone with experience in practical, everyday ethics, and so I called a friend of mine who belongs to Ethical Culture.

He listened carefully and sympathetically and agreed this certainly ought to fall within the Society's province. But when it came to suggestions, he confessed he was stumped.

"Are you sure they know nothing about the area?" he asked.

"I'm not sure of anything, but they said they'd just been transferred East. There's no reason for them *to* know."

"But didn't you say that after seeing your house they drove around the community?"

"Sure, but with all the changed names what would that prove?"

That stopped him.

"I guess you're right," he said. "Well, if worse comes to worst there's always the standard business maxim."

"What's that?"

"*Caveat emptor*—let the buyer beware."

So much for ethics in our business society. I decided to call another rabbi, also a friend of mine. His wife answered the phone and told me he was out of town, too. It was the week end of a rabbinical convention.

"He'll be calling me this evening, though," she said. "Is there anything you want me to to tell him?"

"It's the damnedest thing," I said. "I'm up against something, and I could use his advice as a rabbi. As a matter of fact, you might be able to help me out." And I went through the situation again. "What I wanted to ask him is, do I tell them or don't I?"

She sounded enthralled. "Serves them right!"

"Who? The Wilsons?"

"No, the Jews. They've built themselves back into the ghetto; now they're getting what they deserve." Then she stopped.

"I'm sorry, Alan, I guess that doesn't help you much, but it's just that NSCH isn't the only one; area after area is becoming solidly Jewish. Don't misunderstand," she said, "I'm all for more Jews, it keeps us in business; but what gets me is that they're herding together for all the wrong reasons. Mainly because they're scared."

"What are you talking about? Most of them wouldn't know an anti-Semite if it reached up and bit them."

"Not scared that way, although there may be some element of that in it. Most of them are scared of their own Jewishness. They have so few positive reasons why they're Jews they're afraid to live in a mixed area where they might have to stand up and be identified. So they flock to these all-Jewish communities where they can be anonymous and the problem doesn't exist."

"At least they admit they're Jews."

"Yes, that's true. And they're more comfortable among their own, they say. But what they don't tell you is that they head for these communities because it makes them feel safer. They won't encounter any embarrassments; more important, their kids won't either. So they go right on building the same fears. It makes me sick."

"Right now," I said, "it makes me sicker than you. It may cost me a sale."

"Well," she said with a laugh, "you can

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always call the NAACP. They've had a lot of experience with blockbusting."

I put down the phone. The remark was less flippant than it sounded, I realized; for the phenomenon of self-ghettoization, Jewish and non-Jewish, was spreading not only over the Island, but in Westchester and Connecticut, too. The pattern was a familiar one. Communities that started out mixed would maintain their proportions for a while; then, almost before anyone realized it, a selling wave would sweep the area and, all at once, it would become populated with members of a single faith. As a matter of fact, the problem had become so acute in our own area that our Ministers Board had instituted a study of ways to arrest this one-sided migration. Remembering that, I wondered if perhaps the Board might not be of some help. I looked up the phone number of its head and was just about to call him when I stopped.

I'M NO more chauvinistic than the next Jew, but how do you go about phoning a Christian, a relative stranger, and tell him your area has become so solidly Jewish you wonder if it's right to sell to a Christian? Had discrimination indeed made an about-face and was the problem now anti-Gentilism? True, this exodus of non-Jews had probably been initiated by the non-Jews. But now that I thought about it, I began to recall a smattering of anti-Gentile remarks I had heard. They were most heated during school elections, in which NSC had fought for, and won, a separate elementary school even though NSCH belonged to a larger, predominantly Christian, school district. Would some of the outspoken, injudicious remarks have been made, I now wondered, without an all-Jewish neighborhood (in which Jews could feel "comfortable") to back them up? Wasn't it likely, then, that some families in the community might like to see its uniformity preserved?

Still, I felt sure that at worst these were unconscious drives. Most of my neighbors assuredly felt as we did—we deplored the fact that our Gentile neighbor next door had had to move out, and we would have preferred that our children grew up in a neighborhood that somewhat more realistically reflected proportions as they exist in the outside world (anywhere outside New York City, that is). And wasn't this exactly the problem the Ministers Board was concerned about? Thus decided, I dialed, and the minister, a bright peppery firebrand, answered the phone himself.

"Sell it to 'em!" he said, after I had barely got past my introduction.

"Just like that?" I said, even as I felt relief at official sanction for not having to tell the Wilsons.

"Why not? This is just what we've been fighting. Why, only at the last Ministers meeting, Charley Gold told us his Christian neighbor had decided to move. Charley went over and begged him to reconsider, but no luck. And the neighbor had been living in Wildwood nearly seventeen years."

Wildwood! Five years ago, when NSCH went up, Wildwood was reputed to have a gentleman's agreement not to sell to Jews.

"Frankly," the minister said, "our worst problem is brokers. They're the ones who give the terrific impetus to making communities one-sided. Once they decide an area is predominantly Jewish or Catholic, they perpetuate the situation by showing houses only to Jews or Catholics. And there's nothing we can do about it."

"Well, they mustn't have been completely successful," I said (hoping the minister did not know how few brokers operated in NSC), "we did some cursory checking ourselves, and I see quite a few Gentiles still live in our community."

"Really? I had estimated the figure in North Shore at 90 to 95 per cent Jewish."

"That high?"

"That would be my guess. I know two members of my congregation live in the community, but both are mixed marriages. And in both cases their spouses are Jewish. What's the Wilsons' family situation? Do they have any small children?"

"Two. A little boy and girl."

"Do they know the community?"

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I told him I had doubts, frankly.

The minister paused. "I guess you had better tell them." He thought for a moment: "But I hope to hell they buy it!"

So there I was, back where I started. To make matters worse, no prospective buyers turned up on Sunday. There wasn't even a phone call.

When I came home Monday night, my wife told me Wilson had phoned. There had been another call, too; a Mr. Cohen wanted to see the house at eight. I decided to postpone the call to Wilson at least until after the Cohens left.

At seven-thirty a Cadillac drove up our driveway. Mr. and Mrs. Cohen, a good-looking couple in their late thirties, came in. Mr. Cohen took in the living room and back yard at a glance. "I like it," he said. Then he said something else: "I couldn't tell from the 'Wood,' but when I saw the *mezuzzah* over the door I knew I'd *really* like it. Tell me, are there many Jews in the neighborhood?"

IT WAS almost laughable. Here we had gone to such great pains to assure ourselves that some mixture still existed for the Wilsons, and now we were selling the other side of the street. We'd have to sell it hard, too, I knew, when I overheard Mrs. Cohen's remark to my wife: "We're not prejudiced, *much!*"

"What would you say the percentage of Jews is around here?" Mr. Cohen asked.

I had that figure, all right. "About 90 to 95 per cent."

Mr. Cohen gave me a satisfied look.

"Now all we have to do is make it 100 per cent, right?"

A sale is a sale, and, from the way Cohen talked, he was sold, but good. Still, he had to talk to his lawyer, so he asked me to stall my other buyer until he could call me Tuesday afternoon. But I couldn't; I felt too much like a coward. Besides, from the sound of Cohen, I no longer had anything to lose.

After the Cohens left, I rehearsed my prepared speech. ("I was glad to hear you and your wife drove around the community, Mr. Wilson. Undoubtedly you noticed it's predominantly Jewish. I didn't want you to be under any misapprehensions, although, of course, I realize it will make no difference to you." Well, *you* try to toss that off as an aside!) Then I called. The Wilsons were out; I had one more reprieve.

On the way to work the next morning I felt pretty good. The most important thing was settled; I had at least one buyer for the house. The larger aspects of the problem had relegated themselves to the realm of speculation, where ethics safely belonged, and I was just as thankful. But late that afternoon my wife called me at the office. The Cadillac must have been bought on time, she said; Cohen's lawyer told him he didn't have money enough to swing the deal.

"By the way," she said, "Wilson phoned. He wants you to call him back."

I waited until everyone in the office had gone home. Then I called Wilson. Mrs. Wilson answered. She had just returned from a day's house-hunting, she said, but she had seen nothing to match our house. She had even been over to ———— and ————, and she named two of the wealthiest communities on the South Shore. I knew the communities. Cohen would have loved them; they were 100 per cent Jewish. "But the broker wouldn't show us a thing," Mrs. Wilson said. "He said we'd be unwanted."

It was these words, I think, which brought home with full force the grotesqueness of the whole situation. All at once I could picture the woman on the other end of the phone. If ever there was a magazine-conception all-American family, the Wilsons were it. Mrs. Wilson had been a stewardess before she had married; she was a tall, willowy, flaming redhead. Her husband had been a Marine captain, and their two children were beautiful blue-eyed blonds. This family of American White Protestants was being steered away from communities of their choice because they might not be *wanted!* And all of a sudden I thought to

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myself of the bitter rejoinder "You could always be pioneers!"

But Mrs. Wilson had asked something else, and now, after all the pussyfooting, after all the conscience-searching, after all the worrying about an ethical position (because I knew I had one now; I didn't care if it cost me the sale, I was going to tell her), I heard the question:

"Tell me, are there any Christians at all in the North Shore homes?"

So I could talk about it at last. And because she had raised the question, not because she spared me from having to bring it up (that no longer mattered), and since it showed she was aware of the situation, I told her everything I had learned. I told her about the estimated percentage, about the presence and location of other Gentiles, about my talk with the minister, and that I knew he and everyone else would do everything in their power to make the Wilsons feel at home.

It seemed to more than satisfy her; she even thanked me for all she said I had done on her behalf. "As a matter of fact, you were right," she said. "It doesn't make any difference to us, we're not that religious. We just wanted to make sure for the children's sake that we were not the only Christians."

With clear conscience I assured her she was not. Then she put her husband on the line, and he confirmed that they were buying the house. They would be over first thing in the morning to sign the papers. When I hung up, it was with great shame. After all my pious moralizing, I had succumbed to the same fear I deplored. I had had so little faith in myself and in my neighbors I was convinced that once the Wilsons learned the truth they would never want the house. These people had made me feel humble; by God, I was proud of being a blockbuster, and I had reason to believe some of my neighbors would feel proud, too. Between us and the ministers we'd make sure the Wilsons were wanted in NSCH. There would be a victory—albeit a modest one—for integration on Candytuft Lane.

Which makes the outcome of the Wilson affair all the more anticlimactic; but then fact *is* stranger than fiction, and, with the obvious exception of names and places, everything in this report is true. Early the next morning, my wife got a call from Wilson, who was intensely apologetic. On the way to our place to close the deal, it seems they passed an area they had never investigated. They saw this house for sale and—to make a long story short—bought it on the spot. It was my neighbor who stressed the fact that it was located in the most restricted Gentile town on Long Island.

* * *

A few weeks later, a man turned up at our door, his arm wrapped protectively around his thirteen-year-old daughter. "We saw the temple near-by," he said. "I was looking for a place where my daughter can grow up among Jews. . . ."

We made the sale. So North Shore Community Homes can relax now; all's quiet on Candytuft Lane.

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EISENHOWER AS PRESIDENT

A Critical Appraisal of the Record

WILLIAM V. SHANNON

ACROSS a divided and militarily defenseless Europe, the shadow of Stalin's armies fell; in Korea, Communist Chinese forces pushed American armies back toward the sea; in the United States, Joseph McCarthy scored his first major political triumph, and the Fulbright Committee investigation began to uncover a vein of corruption in the national administration. It was a grim time for Americans. It was November 1950.

When President Truman summoned General Dwight D. Eisenhower to his private study in the White House one afternoon that month to ask him to return to active duty and become chief of the NATO forces in Western Europe, he called upon one of the few Americans who commanded universal respect and admiration. The image of Eisenhower, the liberator of Nazi-occupied Europe, stood bright and untarnished. He was a symbol of the nation's triumphant and united national purpose in a time when the national consensus was fracturing and the national mood becoming querulous and ugly. Eisenhower's acceptance of his new military assignment ended his brief civilian career as president of Columbia University. It restored him to the center of the public scene where in the decade to follow he was to be the dominant figure. His dominance of the age did not derive from any personal mastery of its diverse forces. A central personality may epitomize the spirit of an era and symbolize its prevailing balance of political forces without necessarily transforming the one or controlling the other. As the decade of the 20's is inextricably linked with Calvin Coolidge and the 30's with Franklin Roosevelt, the 1950's in our political history is likely to be known as the age of Eisenhower.

Although Eisenhower has two years still to serve, his place in history and the significance of his presidency are already becoming clear. Eisenhower is a transitional figure. He has not shaped the future nor tried to repeal the past. He has not politically organized nor intellectually defined a new consensus. When he leaves office in January 1961, the foreign policies and the domestic policies of the past generation will be about where he found them in 1953. No national problem, whether it be education, housing, urban revitalization, agriculture, or inflation, will have been advanced importantly toward solution nor its dimensions significantly altered. The Eisenhower era is the time of the great postponement. Dwight Eisenhower, the executor and trustee of the programs of his two Democratic predecessors whose contemporary he was (Eisenhower is only eight years younger than Franklin Roosevelt and six years younger than Harry Truman), already looms in history not as the first great figure of a new Republican age but the last of an old Democratic generation.

In assessing Eisenhower's status, it is worth recalling the somber, impassioned national mood which the sudden, savage turn in the Korean war created eight years ago this autumn. The emotions aroused by that

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IN THIS election month the New York *Post's* Washington columnist essays an over-all assessment of the Eisenhower era, in the rather longer perspective of a historian-journalist. WILLIAM V. SHANNON hails from Worcester, Mass., and holds an A.B. from Clark University and an M.A. from Harvard, in the field of history. The author (with Robert S. Allen) of *The Truman Merry-Go-Round* (1950), he has contributed to the London *Economist*, the *New Republic*, *Commonweal*, and other periodicals. This is the first article by him to appear in COMMENTARY.

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war endangered the great double consensus on foreign affairs and domestic affairs which had been in the making since 1933. Eisenhower's historic function when he entered political life two years later was to end the war and preserve that consensus against the attacks of its enemies.

The domestic consensus had emerged out of the violent political struggles and intellectual gyrations of the New Deal period from 1933 to 1938. It rested on an irreversible common agreement that the Federal government has a responsibility to maintain the rudiments of a welfare state. Social security, unemployment compensation, and minimum wages were the basic features of this program, and its chief guarantors were the trade unions to whom the Wagner Act of 1935 had given firm legal status. The unionists and their unorganized but sympathetic fellow workers were the guarantors of the consensus because they were the most numerous and, compared to the farmers, the old-age pensioners, and other groups, the most politically dependable of all the New Deal beneficiaries. The Full Employment Act of 1946, the first year of the Truman administration, set a seal of official approval on this consensus but did not extend its range.

The other half of the national consensus, the half on foreign policy, had also begun under Roosevelt but had reached its more significant development during the Truman years. Roosevelt, by his aggressive championing of an internationalist position during the bitter isolationist-interventionist debate of 1940-41, established the basis for a national policy. His actions and his education of the public were essential first steps. He carried it further in his negotiations during the war with various Republican party personalities, looking toward our entry into a world organization. Truman completed this undertaking by leading the country into the United Nations. A genuine bipartisan collaboration during the next five years carried through the Marshall Plan, the Greek-Turkish program, the Berlin airlift, the Point Four program, and other achievements abroad. By 1950, the consensus on foreign policy was well established. It rested on the concept of containment. If Russian aggression in all its forms was firmly resisted, if the military and economic strength of the West were maintained and increased, and if the neutral, underdeveloped countries were not lost to Communism, it would be possible to avoid a third war and to leave the resolution of the cold war to the slow working of history.

Communist China's entry into the Korean war put the foreign policy consensus in jeopardy. The shocking defeats, the capture of thousands of our troops by the Communists, and the eventual bloody stalemate aroused many doubts and profound dissatisfaction. The scope of the war and its inherent nature intensified popular resentment and bafflement. It was clearly not a major war evoking the instinctive zeal and emotional commitment of the whole population; yet its duration and the thousands of dead and wounded made it more burdensome than the brief "brushfire wars" that the containment policy had seemed to postulate. If it was only "a police action," as President Truman called it, how could the government ask for wartime sacrifices? If it was a glorious struggle on behalf of the United Nations, why did the other UN members leave almost all of the fighting to us?

The anxieties were deep and shaking. The public, half-unconsciously and inarticulately, began the search for an alternative to the existing consensus. First, there was a brief, wild resurgence of the old isolationist impulse in early December 1950 when the drive to the Yalu turned into disastrous defeat. The momentary impulse to get our forces out of Korea and abandon the Asian mainland to the Chinese Communists receded once General Ridgway rallied our forces and stabilized the military situation. Second, there was the alternative of smashing our way out of the dilemmas of a containment policy by adopting a more venturesome course. This alternative drew upon feelings and posed choices ranging from the proposals for bombing across the Yalu in

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Manchuria to launching a preventive war "to get the whole thing over with." The popularity of this alternative policy of aggressive venturesomeness reached its height in the spring of 1951 when General MacArthur made his triumphant tour through the United States after his dismissal. This alternative began to fade during the prolonged, anti-climactic MacArthur hearings. There was yet a third alternative. Senator Joseph McCarthy and a few other senators propounded the view that the real source of danger was treason within. The tendency of those who propagated this alternative was to deprecate the importance of the Soviet Union's power and enormously inflate the real but limited and secondary dangers of Soviet espionage and political infiltration within this country. The minimizing of the Soviet Union's menace flattered many naively chauvinistic ideas about our own relative place in the sun; the exaggeration of the espionage-infiltration problem catered to a congeries of notions about foreigners, radicals, and Communists. And McCarthy's unexpectedly rich talents for political invention and propaganda gave this alternative a raging vitality which was only beginning in 1950 and did not lose force for more than four years.

As against the alarms and confusions of the isolationist, MacArthurian, and McCarthyite alternatives, Harry Truman and Dean Acheson, the two chief official exponents of the containment policy, made an ineffective defense. Truman was without the resources of rhetoric and the mastery of a grand style which would have enabled a Roosevelt or a Wilson to make an early and overpowering counterattack. Acheson was impaled by his own verbal indiscretions and his starchy public manner. They could only mechanically repeat the familiar platitudes about collective security, the United Nations, and the importance of having allies.

The times called for a man who could restate national purposes, reassert in more winning terms the basic truths underlying the foreign policy consensus, and thereby make possible once again the full concentration of national energies. The situation seemed to require a political figure who would personify the causes that united us rather than those which divided us. It was a situation, in a word, that was historically right for a conservative. The conservative aspiration in politics is always toward the ideal of unity, toward the assertion of proved values and established rationales, and directed toward the deliberate blurring of economic and political conflicts. Even more, the times were right for a certain kind of conservative whose appeal had proved valid in the American past. This was the military hero who had a conservative social background but was basically apolitical and who, although a military man, had the plain, even drab, style suitable in the chief of state of a profoundly civilian country. No "fancy Dans" like the elegant General George Brinton McClellan in 1864 or the imperial, proconsular General Douglas MacArthur in 1952 need apply. What was wanted was another Washington, another Grant. What was wanted, and what was so splendidly and self-evidently available for the asking, if the asking were insistent enough, was Dwight D. Eisenhower.

THE connection between the conservative aspiration (one can scarcely call it, at least in this country, an ideology or a philosophy) and the military hero candidate is more than an expedient alliance. The ideal of national unity dominates the military ethos. Soldiers are trained to defend the existing social order rather than to examine it critically. Military officers see social and economic groups as components in the great design of national strength, not as dynamic participants battling one another in the social arena. If Eisenhower found the conservative Republicans with their dedication to the status quo and their resistance to rapid change more intellectually congenial than the liberal Democrats with their reformist tradition, he was no different from the great majority of his fellow officers. The military services are not a training school for liberals.

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The natural affinity between political conservatives and a military hero has deep roots in the American past. George Washington, our first conservative president and also our first soldier president, set the mold. The conservative Whigs managed to elect only two presidents, General William "Tippecanoe" Harrison in 1840 and General Zachary Taylor in 1848. The Republican politicians seeking to consolidate their hold on the country after the Civil War chose General Grant. Each of these men was relatively innocent of political ideas. Their appeal was based on the exploitation of their personality as a symbol of integrity and unity. Their campaigns were usually keyed to a simple idea. Grant, for example, said in 1868: "Let us have peace." Eisenhower, with the air of a man expressing a crystal clear idea, said repeatedly in 1952: "I believe our test should be—what is good for 155,000,000 Americans."

In the fall of 1949, Senator Arthur Vandenberg wrote in a private letter to a friend that he might support General Eisenhower in the next presidential contest. "I think the specifications call for a personality of great independent magnitude who can give our splintering American people an 'evangel' instead of an ordinary campaign," he wrote.

Three years in advance, Vandenberg had forecast Eisenhower's "Great Crusade." It was as the candidate of the more responsible Republicans interested in protecting the foreign policy consensus that the General entered politics. (In 1948 he had privately favored Vandenberg's own nomination with Harold Stassen as a running mate.) Lacking any alternative to Senator Taft, the Eastern Republicans successfully and plausibly argued with Eisenhower that he would only be carrying out his NATO mission in a different way. By blocking the coming to power of Taft and his neo-isolationist backers, Eisenhower would make certain that a foreign policy oriented toward the defense of Europe and aligned with the principles of the UN would continue to prevail.

Once nominated, Eisenhower necessarily took into account the three principal strains of Republican party criticism of existing foreign policy. Speaking about the Korean war in Peoria, Illinois, he projected the goal of the ultimate withdrawal of American troops from mainland Asia. If there had to be wars there, "let Asians fight Asians." This remark delighted the devout readers of the Chicago *Tribune*. It evoked glowing words of praise from troglodyte politicians like ex-Senator C. Wayland "Curly" Brooks. But it was meaningless. As army chief of staff in 1946-48, Eisenhower had repeatedly and successfully recommended the withdrawal of American troops from Korea. Moreover, it was settled national military policy to avoid stationing troops on the Asian mainland. But this was quite different from disengaging ourselves completely from our interests and responsibilities on that continent. The Peoria speech was only a fugitive gesture to the isolationists.

Eisenhower made more ambiguous gestures in the direction of the aggressive alternative symbolized by General MacArthur. He allowed himself the liberty of condemning the "negativism" of the containment policy and of referring vaguely to the "liberation" and the "rolling back" of the Communist empire. He promised to go to Korea but he left open the question whether he would end the war by extending it to gain a decisive military victory, or try to end it by continuing the armistice negotiations. The campaign rhetoric unfortunately persisted after election day. In his first State of the Union message, Eisenhower "unleashed" Chiang Kai-shek. Secretary of State Dulles wordily threatened the Communists with "massive retaliation" at times and places of our own choosing. The administration strengthened the government's propaganda forces to wage psychological warfare, seize the strategic initiative, liberate the satellite states by radio broadcasts, and attain various other doubtlessly worthy if uncertain ends. Two crises in the Formosa Straits have demonstrated Chiang Kai-shek is not a free agent; the Hungarian revolution proved the United States had no intention of risking anything to liberate the satellite peoples.

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Eisenhower, during the 1952 campaign and for a period thereafter, accommodated himself in small, symbolic ways to the emotional thrust of McCarthyism. He deleted a brief word of praise for General Marshall, his patron, from his Milwaukee speech; he affirmed vigorously his determination to clear the Communists out of government, to encourage the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and to cooperate with the investigating committees of Congress, clearly implying the Truman administration had been remiss, if not treasonable, in these matters. He did not avow belief in the McCarthyite conspiracy theory of the origin of the country's troubles but, to the dismay of some of his admirers in both parties and former colleagues in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, neither did he disavow it.

EISENHOWER'S strategy in waging the "Great Crusade" was the only one possible for him given the plasticity of his temperament, his unintellectual cast of mind, and his confident, optimistic nature. He did not separate the sheep from the goats; he welcomed all dissidents to his cause, committed himself in an irretrievable way only to invulnerable platitudes, and hinted genially that in his new synthesis a reconciliation of all divergent elements would be possible. This may not have been the internationalist "evangel" that Vandenberg and his other original supporters had in mind, but it is typical of successful party leaders in our country. Franklin Roosevelt, for example, was able in 1932 to hold the loyalty and quicken the hopes of Huey Long and Bernard Baruch, of Harry Byrd and George Norris. Roosevelt organized his coalition with care and calculation while Eisenhower, gifted with some of the instincts if not the insight and expertise of a successful politician, apparently only did what came naturally to him. If his tactics did not rally a newly broadened and better informed support for the foreign policy consensus, they served at least to deaden and to dissipate the pressures for any serious change from that policy. Eisenhower's fabian tactics carried through successfully the defensive holding action which Truman and Acheson after 1950 could no longer sustain.

As against this negative but vitally important accomplishment, Eisenhower's own positive initiatives in foreign affairs dwindle into insignificance. The Baghdad pact in the Middle East and the SEATO pact in the Far East are pale imitations of the NATO pact in Europe. They have proved irrelevant, if not noxious, diplomatic devices. The administration's ambivalent attitude toward Nasser brought the Atlantic Alliance almost to the breaking point in the Suez affair, but our common interests with Britain are so strong they can survive almost any shock; under Prime Minister Macmillan's soothing ministrations, the alliance re-formed itself. Eisenhower has given hospitality in his administration to MacArthurite tendencies in the persons of Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson and Admiral Arthur Radford, but he has heeded their counsel scarcely more than his predecessor did the words of MacArthur himself. Eisenhower has tried the "great man theory" of diplomacy at the summit in Geneva and Dulles has subjected himself to innumerable conferences and journeyings, but no new approaches to the Soviet monolith have developed and none of the old has availed much. Eisenhower settled for truces in Korea and Indo-China, leaving those countries divided and their future unsettled. This is the kind of minimum accommodation between the Communist and non-Communist worlds which the original containment concept had envisaged.

Holding the line and protecting the gains of the past worked well enough in Europe where in the Eisenhower years the situation has remained virtually stable. Secretary Dulles threatened the French with an agonizing reappraisal, but the French were supremely indifferent. So in the end was the Secretary of State. The European Defense Community died, the British and French patched up a reasonable substitute, and the only agonizing was done by the Secretary's Democratic critics. Career diplo-

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mats worked out a compromise solution of the Trieste affair, the Russians relinquished their grip on Austria, and the United States kept the line open to Tito in Belgrade. Germany remained divided. Europe remained divided.

In the Middle East and the Far East, however, creative policy making was called for. The situations were less stable and the inherited guide lines of policy were less well developed. Eisenhower had no contribution to make to the hard problems of Arab and Israeli, of African nationalism, of Communist China's menace to Southeast Asia, of Indonesia's interior decay, and of India's economic viability. He held the line and beyond that he could not go. When he got in trouble on a foreign policy issue in these areas of the world, it was usually because he applied the lessons of the postwar past rigidly and almost mechanically. He reacted to the Anglo-French-Israeli war with Egypt as if it were the Communist invasion of South Korea all over again. When the Chinese Communists shelled Quemoy and Matsu in 1958, he again reacted: hold the line. When Democratic critics attacked him for a lack of discrimination in applying the principle of resisting Communist pressure, Eisenhower responded only with a stubborn reiteration of the principle. At his press conference on October 15, 1958, a reporter asked him if he believed the expression of opposition views on Quemoy "actually weakens the administration's position or ability to negotiate." Eisenhower replied:

> No, not always, but I will tell you: there is a very clear distinction to be made with respect to foreign policy as I see it. One is the policy and one is its operation.
>
> Every single day there are new and tough decisions that have to be made within a foreign policy, but if you go back to 1947 [the date of the Truman Doctrine and the beginning of the Marshall Plan] and see the statements that are made about opposing the territorial expansion of Communism by force, when you go back and see what our policy went into in the effort to develop collective security, mutual aid, technical assistance, that kind of thing that . . . at least will help to make the free world stronger collectively and each individual nation as opposed to Communism, that when you come down to it are the basic parts of the policy.
>
> At times, humans, being human, are going to make errors. And therefore I do not, by any means, decry intelligent questioning and criticism of any particular point. But when it comes to the policy that is being established, *I think it has been standing pretty well on its own feet for a long time* (italics added).

Eisenhower's clear distinction between a policy and the carrying out of that policy may be simpleminded, but future historians are not likely to find a better or more revealing extemporaneous tribute to the foreign policy consensus. Eisenhower's caretaker attitude is clear. His and Dulles's day-to-day decisions do not matter; only the policy matters, and it has an autonomous life of its own not really greatly dependent on their daily actions and judgments.

When Harry Truman ordered American troops into Korea in June 1950, he did not know that he was killing his Fair Deal domestic program. War and liberalism always go ill together, but when the Korean conflict began few foresaw how it would transform the domestic economic scene and jeopardize the national consensus on domestic policy. When the war broke the country was just pulling itself out of the mild recession of 1949-50. With more than 4,000,000 unemployed and farm prices drifting downward, the overriding problem seemed to be how to avoid a possible depression. The Truman administration was ready to adopt the familiar Keynesian solutions of deficit financing and easier credit. Meanwhile, Truman in the 81st Congress of 1949-50 pushed hard for an extension of the welfare state program. He recommended the Brannan farm plan, Federal health insurance, fair employment practices legislation, increased slum clearance, and Federal aid to education. The country seemed lethargic and a bit hesitant about these proposals. The Democratic congressional majorities elected in 1948 were not quite large enough to pass them. Except for the Wagner-Ellender-Taft Housing Act of 1949 which passed

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with Republican cooperation, all of these measures failed by a few votes. Yet it would require only small Democratic gains in the November 1950 elections to insure their passage.

The Korean war, however, not only benefited the Republicans at the polls and made the 82nd Congress of 1951-52 considerably more conservative than its predecessor, but also touched off a severe inflation. Unemployment vanished, farm prices soared, and the high cost of living replaced the threat of joblessness as a key domestic issue.

The emergence of the inflation issue played an important part in Eisenhower's first victory and has been significant in influencing the tone of his administration. The fear of inflation greatly helped him to organize a new majority coalition in the country and end the Republican party's chronic minority status. Before 1952, the Republican party drew its strength principally from three groups. One was the more sophisticated Eastern industrial and financial community and its allies in the press, clergy, and universities; this was an elite group, small in numbers but important in terms of wealth, prestige, and influence in the mass communication industries. By a British analogy, these voters, overwhelmingly but not exclusively Republican, make up what might be called the American Establishment. These were the people who had organized the successful Willkie boom in 1940 and had subsequently more or less accepted Governor Dewey and his associate Herbert Brownell as their political agents. A second group was the less sophisticated, much more numerous but relatively less effective, hard-shelled conservative business and commercial people of the smaller cities and towns of the Midwest. Their idol was Robert A. Taft. These voters gave, at most, grudging acceptance to the great consensus; some hoped for a withdrawal into isolation, others resented labor unions. The strongest conviction they shared was that government cost too much, that the budget should always be balanced, and taxes reduced promptly. The third group were the farmers who had voted predominantly Republican since the midterm election of 1938. These three groups were not enough to make a majority. The Democrats were able to maintain themselves in power with the support of the captive South and the second and third-generation immigrant community voters in the nation's dozen largest metropolitan areas.

EISENHOWER cracked the Democratic big cities and the high cost of living was probably his most potent weapon. He made sharp gains among housewives. Moreover, he broke into the ranks of the young voters. During the 1930's and 40's, voters under thirty had been heavily Democratic. By 1952, however, many young war veterans bore a burden of fixed charges, in their mortgaged suburban homes, with appliances bought on the installment plan, driving cars purchased through a finance company. In abstract economic theory, debtors benefit from inflation, but as a practical matter many of these voters felt they were losing in the dollar race. They feared their wages and salaries would not keep pace with rising prices. They voted for Eisenhower.

However, there were other causes bidding for the allegiances of these voters being detached from the old Democratic urban coalition. One of them was McCarthyism. McCarthy had an entree to these voters because, like many of them, he was Catholic and of immigrant ancestry. He was also relatively young and a war veteran. He was a demagogue with a simple issue to exploit who made a biting, raucous, emotional appeal. For these voters, his appeal was quite a new and different experience contrasted to the stodgy, Chamber of Commerce rhetoric they had been accustomed to hear from Republican orators.

The only real threat to the domestic economic consensus established in the New Deal and perpetuated in Truman's Fair Deal would come from a genuine linkage between working-class- and lower-middle-class urban voters, attracted by a non-economic issue like McCarthyism, and the regular Republican voters of the more hard-

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shelled, conservative, Midwestern school. If the Republican ticket in 1952 had been Taft and Knowland instead of Eisenhower and Nixon, this linkage might have had serious consequences. A right-wing Republican administration much indebted to the emotional dynamism of the McCarthyites for its victory might have attempted a genuine counter-revolution to reverse many of the verdicts of the 30's and 40's embodied in the economic consensus. Eisenhower's nomination forestalled this eventuality. He absorbed the McCarthyite frenzy into his own "Great Crusade" where in subsequent years it died of inanition.

In terms of the internal dynamics of the Republican party, therefore, Eisenhower's victory in November 1952 had several meanings. It meant much of the potential McCarthy following had been detached from his orbit and their fears, dissatisfactions, and status tensions given a different kind of political expression. "I Like Ike" was a harmless substitute for hating the targets McCarthy singled out. The Eisenhower victory meant that millions of lifelong Republican voters were doomed to a new frustration. The "hard-shells" hoping for a permanent cut in foreign aid, a crackdown on labor, or a big reduction in taxes and the budget had contributed to a victory that in terms of these objectives had no meaning. The Eisenhower victory also meant that there were now millions of voters momentarily enlisted in the Republican cause who had never been in the party before; they had been attracted by "Ike"'s personality, by his promise to bring down the cost of living, and by a desire to escape the Korean stalemate. And finally the victory meant that the predominant Republican wing of the American Establishment was, for the first time in a generation, in power in an administration of its own choosing.

THE Eisenhower performance was bound to disappoint at least some of these divergent groups. In practice, it has disappointed them all, and for an odd reason. Upon taking office, Eisenhower, the choice of the more sophisticated Republicans, turned out to have many of the convictions of the most Tory adherents of Taft: he did not share their animus against union labor, but otherwise he was a true disciple of the Old Guard orthodoxy. He believed in the absolute primacy of thrift, he wanted to return government functions to the states, he believed deficit financing was sin, he believed high taxes and government regulations were "stifling free enterprise." Eisenhower in the White House was closer to an Iowa Rotarian than to a Wall Street banker. He was the man from Abilene, Kansas, not the man from Morningside Heights.

The Eisenhower administration vaguely disappointed many in the Eastern elite who had hoped for more positive leadership. Nelson Rockefeller symbolized this discreet discontent when he left the administration and financed a series of reports on public issues urging ambitious programs far more costly than Eisenhower would countenance. The blue-ribbon members of the committee which presented the Gaither Report on national defense filed, in effect, a dissent to Eisenhower's concept of the national interest.

Eisenhower and Agriculture Secretary Benson, committed to the view that subsidies were intrinsically wrong and that what farmers desired above all was the liberation from government marketing and production restraints, did not abolish subsidies, restraints, or surpluses, but they did manage to alienate the farmers, a dwindling but still sizable Republican voting bloc.

The newer Republicans, converted in 1952 in the cities and the suburbs, should have been reassured by the administration's preoccupation with the inflation problem and "the stable dollar." To some extent they were, but they had other tangible concerns such as the schools their children attended and the cost of medical care for their aged parents. The Eisenhower administration, penny-pinched and budget-obsessed, sabotaged the annual legislative drives for Federal aid to schools, cut back the slum clearance program almost to a nullity, and on the whole failed to demonstrate that it was

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vitally concerned with the needs of the urban and lower-income voters. The latter retained their "liking for Ike," but as early as 1954 and in increasing numbers they, like many farmers, began to re-identify their own economic welfare with the Democratic party. The gap between Eisenhower's popularity and that of the Republican party widened rather than narrowed as his years in the White House progressed.

The hard-shell Republicans who should have been most pleased at the President's unanticipated sharing of their convictions have been disillusioned by his lack of fighting zeal. If the budget were to be balanced at a modest level, income taxes substantially reduced, the balance of functions between the Federal and state governments shifted, and the trend to big government reversed, it would require as many violent political struggles as it took to pass the New Deal in the first place. It would probably be necessary, for example, to pass a national right-to-work law, forbid industry-wide collective bargaining, and break the political activities of the labor unions. On no front has Eisenhower undertaken a struggle of this magnitude. If his limited physical strength and his limited intellectual interest in this sort of problem were not sufficient to debar such a conflict, his desire for national unity and harmony would in any case prevent it. The domestic consensus rests secure in his hands.

Arthur Larson, the quondam philosopher of "Modern Republicanism," propounded the thesis in his book *A Republican Looks At His Party* (1956) that the Republican party under Eisenhower's leadership had "for the first time in our history discovered and established the Authentic American Center in politics." The Eisenhower administration expressed an "American Consensus." The steady decay of the Republican party at the state and congressional district level throughout the Eisenhower years is enough to discredit this thesis. Parties which have formulated a widely accepted consensus on the big contemporary issues and are united behind a great leader do not show these alarming signs of disaffection and disrepair.

THERE is an American Consensus on the issues, but it was developed by Franklin Roosevelt and developed further in some respects by Truman. Eisenhower has been content to leave it undisturbed. His few attempts to return to the "little government" of a bygone day have been abortive. Two statistics alone are enough to account for his defeat: there are 40,000,000 more Americans than there were twenty years ago and more than one-third of all Americans now live in states other than those in which they grew up. The growing population makes the pressure for increased government services irresistible and the mobility of that population makes it equally inevitable that the people look to the Federal government to supply those services as state loyalties disappear and state boundaries become unreal.

Eisenhower did disturb the old political balance of power as distinguished from the consensus on issues, but he had not the energies, the talents, nor the experience to exploit his personal triumphs for his party's advantage.

Eisenhower has been the great leader *manqué*. His dignified bearing, his warm flashing smile, his easy manners made him seem a man with whom most voters could feel at ease, and his hero's reputation made him seem a man in whom they could safely trust their destiny. Has their trust been misplaced? The answer lies in America's margin for error. Eisenhower and his administration have lived off the accumulated wisdom, the accumulated prestige, and the accumulated military strength of his predecessors who conducted more daring and more creative regimes. If our margin for error is as great as it has traditionally been, these quiet Eisenhower years will have been only a pleasant idyll, an inexpensive interlude in a grim century. If our margin for error is much thinner than formerly, Eisenhower may join the ranks of history's fatal good men, the Stanley Baldwins and the James Buchanans. Their intentions were good and their example is pious, but they bequeathed to their successors a black heritage of time lost and opportunities wasted.

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T. S. ELIOT'S STATURE AS CRITIC

A Revaluation

F. R. LEAVIS

HOW can a book of criticism be at once so distinguished and so unimportant? The question is the more worth asking because the author of this volume was at one time so unquestionably a major critical influence. As I ask it, I recall that I bought my copy of *The Sacred Wood* (the fly leaf carries the evidence) in 1920. How I came to buy it so soon after the publication I can't now say. I had never heard of Eliot, and I had no more library sophistication than I had acquired at school before the war. And though I turned the book over a good deal, and no doubt profited, I won't pretend that I absorbed rapidly what it had to give, or that it became for me, after a short acquaintance, decisively formative, or anything but a vague and minor stimulus. In those early years after the great hiatus, as in a dazed and retarded way I struggled to achieve the beginnings of the power of articulate thought about literature, it was Santayana—I picked up Logan Pearsall Smith's *Little Essays from the Writings of George Santayana* also when it came out—and Matthew Arnold who really counted. (Let me say at once that I didn't, and don't, find Santayana fundamentally congenial: indebtedness to an influence needn't mean radical sympathy or approval—the generalized observation has, perhaps, its point in a note on T. S. Eliot's place in criticism.)

The Sacred Wood, I think, had very little influence or attention before the Hogarth Press brought out *Homage to John Dryden,* the pamphlet in which the title essay was accompanied by "The Metaphysical Poets" and "Andrew Marvell." It was with the publication in this form of those essays (the Hogarth Press had recently published *The Waste Land*) that Eliot became the important contemporary critic. It was the impact of this slender new collection that sent one back to *The Sacred Wood* and confirmed with decisive practical effect one's sense of the stimulus to be got from that rare thing, a fine intelligence in literary criticism—the fine intelligence so certainly present in the earlier and larger collection. And the nature of the peculiar force of the criticism—the condition of the authority with which it claimed one's attention—was now plain. "Sensibility alters from generation to generation in everybody, whether we will or no: but expression is only altered by a man of genius." Again, in the same essay, one of his finest—it is in fact a model of critical writing—Eliot says of certain "second-rate" poets that "They have not the sensitiveness and consciousness to perceive that they feel differently from the preceding generation, and therefore must use words differently." Eliot was the man of genius who, after the long post-Swinburnian arrest, altered expression. Such an achievement was possible only to a poet in whom the creative gift was a rare gift of consciousness. An intense and highly conscious work of critical intelligence necessarily preceded and accompanied the discovery of the new uses of words, the means of expressing or creating the new feelings and modes of thought, the

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F. R. LEAVIS, a leading literary critic of the English-speaking world and the author of such major works as *The Great Tradition* (1948), *The Common Pursuit* (1952), and *Revolution* (1936), here examines the accomplishment of T. S. Eliot as a literary critic, on the occasion of the publication of the latter's most recent collection of essays, *On Poets and Poetry* (Farrar, Straus and Cudahy). Mr. Leavis has previously contributed essays on Van Wyck Brooks (November 1952), the great books (September 1953), and Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (February, 1956)

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new rhythms, the new versification. This is the critical intelligence manifested in those early essays; Eliot's best, his important, criticism has an immediate relation to his technical problems as the poet who, at that moment in history, was faced with "altering expression."

Never had criticism a more decisive influence. The poetry would without its aid in any case have compelled recognition; it was the poetry that won attention for the criticism, rather than the other way round. What the criticism did was to insure that recognition of the poetry should be accompanied by a general decisive change, not only of taste, but of critical idea and idiom, of critical approach to questions of poetic, and of the sense of the past of English poetry and of the relation of the past to the present.

It was an impressive achievement. What was not at once apparent to all those impressed was that some of the ideas, attitudes, and valuations put into currency by Eliot were arbitrary: some of the most distinctive and influential neither followed from his best critical insights nor drew any valid authority from the creative successes that seemed to lend them force. The attribution of "consciousness" to Eliot should not be allowed to mislead. The radically distinctive thing about him, in fact, is that he should have fallen so short of achieving the consciousness that one thinks of as necessary to the great creative writer. The limitation, the disability—it is a case challenging a diagnostic approach—has its ominous document in a famous early essay: "Tradition and the Individual Talent." It was on this essay pre-eminently that was based Eliot's reputation as a thinker, a disciplined intelligence notably capable of rigorous, penetrating, and sustained thought.

Actually the trenchancy and vigor are illusory and the essay is notable for its ambiguities, its logical inconsequences, its pseudo-precisions, its fallaciousness, and the aplomb of its equivocations and its specious cogency. Its offered compression and its technique in general for generating awed confusion help to explain why it should not have been found easy to deal with. Yet the falsity and gratuitousness of its doctrine of impersonality are surely plain enough. "And I hinted by an analogy," says Eliot (referring to the famous platinum shred) "that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of 'personality,' not in being necessarily more interesting, or having 'more to say,' but rather in being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations." But one can be as free as D. H. Lawrence was from any romantic inclination to say that the artist's business is "to express his personality"—one can see a truism in Lawrence's diagnostic placing of the "personality," in relation to vital intelligence, as the associate of "will" and "idea"—and at the same time believe as intensely as Lawrence did that without the distinguished individual, distinguished by reason of his potency as a conduit of urgent life and by the profound and sensitive responsibility he gives proof of towards his living experience, there is no art that matters.

Eliot's doctrine of "impersonality" is insidiously designed to eliminate this conception of the artist; he gives the possibility no recognition. The word "experience" recurs in his argument and he speaks of "passions"; the mind of the poet (the "shred of platinum"), he tells us, "may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates." This, plausible or discussible as it might for a moment seem, is a wholly arbitrary dictum, any appearance to the contrary being a matter of the complexity, the ambiguities, and the specious and tendentious inconsequence, of the total context. The analogy of the catalyst gives it no support (all it does is to make the underlying intention plain). When we ask how a platinum shred can "digest and transmute the passions which are its materials," we note that it has become also a "more finely per-

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fected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations." How we get from a "liberty to enter into new combinations" to "the mind which creates" Eliot does nothing at all to explain; it is surely a long way—it is in fact a yawning gap in his theory or diagram. A little further on the "medium" becomes something even more flatly inert: "The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together."

Nothing is done to supply the absent something answering to the verb "create" ("the mind which creates") by the reference, a couple of sentences later, to the "intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place," for Eliot does nothing to explain or suggest what the process is, or where the pressure could come from. Instead, he offers us, with the air of the most cogent quintessential relevance, such inconsequent propositions as that the "ode by Keats contains a number of feelings which have nothing to do with the nightingale, but which the nightingale, partly because of its attractive name, and partly because of its reputation, served to bring together." As if there were not something else, more important, to be said about the relation of the ode to the life, the living, from which it derived the creative impulsion; derived something without full recognition of which there can be no intelligent appreciation of the "artistic process" or the art.

It is not then a coherent conception of art that is figured in Eliot's "artist." It *is*, however, a familiar ethos or case. "The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates": the perfection of this artist is something different from what we admire in *Anna Karenina*. No one with Tolstoy in mind as the type of the great creative writer could have advanced that proposition: "separate," for such a use is not a possible word, whether one thinks of Tolstoy or Lawrence (the perfection of many of whose tales will, I hope, be granted) or Shakespeare—or George Eliot or Mark Twain. But when we recognize that the artist implicitly proposed is Flaubert, then the proposition becomes intelligible, if not acceptable. And that it should be so gives us Eliot's own case.

In contemplating the work of one of the great creative powers we don't find ourselves impelled to think of the pressure of the artistic process as something apart from the pressure of the living—the living life and the lived experience—out of which the work has issued; for that the work *has* so issued, deriving thence its sustenance and the creative impulsion, we don't question. An intensity of art devoted to expressing disgust at *la platitude bourgeoise*—Flaubert's opposing art to life as something apart from and superior to it—entails a self-contradiction; it portends an inner thwarting disorder, a profound vital disharmony that has defeated intelligence in the artist and made any but a strained and starved creativity impossible.

It clearly is a most significant defeat of intelligence that presents itself to us in Eliot's essay. What pressure, what need, we ask, explains this earnestness of intellectual subtlety devoted in so strenuous a play of trenchancy, confusion, and inconsequence, to absolving the artist from the need to have lived—the need to be a fully living individual wholly committed to life, in whom the impulsion of the lived experience and the courage of responsibility towards it appear as the "intensity of the artistic process"? We can't help seeing the answer in the co-presence in *The Sacred Wood* of the essay on *Hamlet*, which in so odd, confident, and arbitrary a way reduces that tragedy to a matter of an inexpressible emotional state, one of disgust, occasioned in Hamlet by his mother. It isn't that the play doesn't face us with problems. But to assert with so little argument so drastically simplifying an account of it, while relying as for support that makes even the show of first-

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hand analysis unnecessary on J. M. Robertson, the ironclad Scottish rationalist, and Professor E. E. Stoll—is this, we ask, a manifestation of critically poised and disinterested intelligence? It isn't that there aren't grounds for calling *Hamlet* the "Mona Lisa of literature." But what, we ask, are the grounds for such a pronouncement as this: "*Coriolanus* may not be as 'interesting' as *Hamlet,* but it is, with *Antony and Cleopatra,* Shakespeare's most assured artistic success." It is a significantly odd preoccupation with the criteria of "assured artistic success" that betrays Eliot into such an emphasis at the expense of (say) *Macbeth;* and I personally find enough artistic success in *Measure for Measure,* which in the same paragraph Eliot seems to associate with *Hamlet* as another (also "profoundly interesting") artistic failure dealing with "intractable" material (Eliot's adjective), to compel my placing it among Shakespeare's very greatest things. Why does Eliot call its material "intractable"? That behind the important part played by "disgust" in *Hamlet* there is material that is in some sense "intractable" may be plausibly argued; but where is the "disgust" or the comparable "intractability" in *Measure for Measure?* What I find is a wonderfully sure, direct, profound, and delicate treatment of sex, and I suspect that it is this which for Eliot constitutes the "intractability"—I suspect that for him it assimilates to the "disgust" of *Hamlet*—so that in respect of that very different work too he is an untrustworthy reporter. And as for his exaltation of *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra,* it is significant that in neither of those plays do we feel Shakespeare to be as wholly or profoundly engaged as in the other great tragedies; if we were bent on exposing the absurdity of the dictum, "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates," it is precisely *not* to *them* that we should go.

Our sense that Eliot's essay tells us more about Eliot than about Shakespeare's *Hamlet* finds a striking, if hardly necessary, confirmation in Eliot's own *Family Reunion.* It is remarkable how much of his account of the artistic problem facing Shakespeare seems to describe his own problem (as we divine it) in writing that play. "Hamlet (the man) [Harry] is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible because it is in excess of the facts as they appear." The account of that feeling which Eliot describes as baffling Hamlet (and Shakespeare)—doesn't it strike us as being, in the emphasis it lays on the peculiar baffling and "inexpressible" quality, an account of the feeling we associate with Eliot's play? "It is thus a feeling which he cannot understand; he cannot objectify it, and it therefore remains to poison life and obstruct action." And our sense of Eliot's personal engagement in Harry, an engagement that he is largely unaware of, representing as it does a complexity of profound feeling in himself that he doesn't understand, is such as to cause some embarrassment, especially when the play is acted.

There is in Eliot's criticism abundant evidence of negative attitudes towards life, attitudes of disgust and fear and rejection, that play a part of which he is not properly conscious; entailing as they do the Flaubertian kind of self-contradiction, they portend a radical failure of wholeness and coherence in him, and consequently a defeat of intelligence. "To reduce one's disorderly and mostly silly personality to the gravity of a *jeu de quilles* would be an excellent thing: yet for this a great poet, Landor, has been condemned to obloquy." In the conception of poetry as a "*jeu de quilles,*" and the corresponding absurdity of our being offered Landor as a great poet, we have, one might say, what Eliot's theory of "impersonality" logically points to—if it were a coherent theory, and could be said to point logically to anything. The significance of this elevation of Landor appears plainly enough in another of Eliot's references to him—one that I haven't been able to look up, but remember (I am sure) pretty accurately: Landor, we are told, is a test of whether we go to poetry because we are interested in poetry, or merely in order to have our own feeble

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lusts and desires flattered. The startling gratuitousness of this alleged alternative as part of a proposition about the merits of Landor's *jeu de quilles* reveals the nature and strength of the pressure behind the strained intellection with which Eliot offers to establish "impersonality." The violence of "lusts and desires" is a violence of repudiation, and it is enhanced by that conveyed in "feeble" and "flattered"; and one can say with confidence that, if he had been conscious of the effect to which the whole proposition would be significant for the critical reader, he could not have let it stand. But no vigilance or caution ("This classiosity is bunkum, but still more cowardice," said Lawrence) will preserve a critic who carries in him so disturbing a pressure of disordered inner life, of emotion that he fears and distrusts and cannot understand ("it therefore remains to poison life and obstruct action"), from such failures of intelligence.

As a poet, of course, Eliot himself, even at the time of his early criticism, was not a platinum shred, or a "medium" in which feelings, phrases, and images were merely at liberty to enter into new combinations. He didn't need to be critically conscious about the "intensity of the artistic process" or the nature of the "pressure under which the fusion took place," but—or rather, for—the pressure was there. His artist's intelligence manifested itself in the judgment that determined him to the creative undertakings his powers were fitted for; he didn't attempt a *Hamlet* (though he was, much later, to commit himself to a *Family Reunion*) or anything requiring the insight into human emotions, and the intelligence about life, of a major novelist. It was as the poet who, intent at that moment of history on "altering expression," was conscious that he "felt differently, and therefore must use words differently," that he applied a focused critical intelligence most consciously and effectively. The resulting criticism, that which—with him—we recognize as his best ("it is a by-product," he says in the present volume, "of my private poetry workshop, or a prolongation of the thinking that went into the formation of my own verse"), doesn't commit him to the testing kinds of value-judgment.

His work in general as critic has its value in spite of the fact that what one is apt to think of as an essential function of an important critic either hardly comes into the question, or is performed in a way that is far from exemplifying the critic's strength. There is, of course, value-judgment (though not an *appraisal* of, say, Donne or Marvell or Dryden) entailed in the very effectively directed critical observations by which he established a general taste for the Metaphysicals and a general understanding of its relevance to the appreciation of his own creative achievement. But the force and justice of the limiting suggestions I am making become very plain when we consider his critical dealings with the dramatists. He made some stimulating observations about dramatic verse and the conventions of poetic drama, but no radically intelligent—no truly critical—appraisal of any of the Elizabethans or Jacobeans; he has done, in fact, nothing to disturb at all seriously, where Elizabethan-Jacobean drama is in question, the institutional valuation coming down from Lamb and Swinburne; rather, he has confirmed its inflationary habit.

Eliot's standing as a distinguished critic, then, depends as little on his penetration and sureness in the more important kinds of value-judgment as on his powers of sustained coherent and trenchant thought. His performance as a judge of his contemporaries has been consistently disastrous. It is represented at its most respectable by his backing Joyce—the significance of which election, all the same, is given in his dismissal of Lawrence. The author of *The Waste Land* (the notes to which, or some of them, have an essential supporting function—even a constructive one—for all the light cynicism of Eliot's amused and superior self-dissociation from them in the present volume), did naturally prefer to the great creative writer of his time, fertile in works that have an irresistible living wholeness, the writer whose ingenuities and pedantries of con-

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structive will are signals of the default of organic life, betraying the failure of imaginative creativity. And I don't doubt, though this seems to me a severe thing to have to say, that his lifelong backing of Wyndham Lewis has represented a genuine taste. Yet I can't believe that he could have committed himself to such extravagant appraisals of this last as a creative writer and a thinker if he hadn't known him personally (one tries to give Eliot credit for a kind of loyalty that isn't at all a virtue in a critic as such), and belonged to a dominant literary-social milieu in which such appraisals were current. What in fact I have come to is the radical conventionality of judgment that contradicts Eliot's distinction as a critic and so disconcertingly qualifies his intelligence.

Thus when in the present volume one reads of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* as a "long poem in the first rank" one can't think of the conventionality as merely superficial, or anything but representative and significant; there is too much supporting evidence. For instance, the limiting "but" doesn't at all take from the significance of this: "Yet one cannot but feel that a play like Congreve's *Way of the World* is in some way more mature than any play of Shakespeare's: but only in this respect, that it reflects a greater maturity of *manners*." What is significant here is the completeness of Eliot's surrender to the consecrated and current nonsense about supreme wit, consummate prose, and perfection of lightness in *The Way of the World;* for that is what we must invoke to explain the irresponsible way in which he abuses and cheapens so essential a term as "maturity" (he is writing on "What Is a Classic?"). "*Maturity* of manners": what can it mean where manners are isolated in this way—what can maturity of manners be if not something to be discussed in terms of the relation between manners and more radical things (moral values, shall we say?) lying behind them? The conventional acceptance of *The Way of the World* as a summit of civilization and literary refinement goes with an inability to see a consummateness of wit and humor and a delicate living mastery of tone, manifestations of a supreme vitality of intelligence, in D. H. Lawrence—where they are.

Then, if one had really judged for oneself that there was something at all great about Shelley's orgy of such very embarrassingly Shelleyan Shakespearizing, could one have written that, of the verse plays by 19th-century poets, the "greatest is probably *The Cenci*"? In the same essay, "The Music of Poetry," I see, as I turn over the pages, a solemn reference to the nonsense verse of Edward Lear: "We enjoy the music which is of a high order, and we enjoy the feeling of irresponsibility towards the sense." That kind of inert and banal conventionality suggests the simple conclusion that the weakness under consideration may be summed up as just the natural accompaniment of the specialized and limited kind of interest in poetry, the lack of concern with radical value-judgment, characterizing, as we have noted, Eliot's early and decisive criticism. The judicial reference to Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther* as a "great poem" could fairly be adduced in confirmation: for the Eliot of the best early criticism there was no strong reason for resisting the impulse to describe the brilliance of Dryden's characteristic and so un-Swinburnian poem, that triumph of polemical and expository wit, as greatness.*

YET the case has another aspect and a very important one for the student of English literary history of the last forty years. We come on it when we read, not for the first time in Eliot, of W. P. Ker as a scholar who was also a notable critic—as preeminently the type of the truly valuable scholar-critic. Well, I have myself in the past gone again and again to Ker's books for help in the fields in which he offers it and never found anything but disappointment. Nor have I met anyone else (whose opinion mat-

*Eliot says that he considers Dryden one of the three greatest critics of poetry in English literature, the other two being Samuel Johnson and Coleridge—a judgment that seems to me a portent of conventionality.

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ters to me—on Eliot himself I have never had the opportunity to press my questions) who has also tried and reports otherwise. My explanation of the uncritical appraisal so confidently offered is that Ker, a metropolitan professor, belonged in the 1920's to a select social-literary world, and Eliot met him in the right places and the right company. I am the less troubled by any sense of taking an impertinent hazard in coming out with this, because of the great deal in Eliot's critical record that admits of no other explanation.

Consider, for instance, the early appreciation of Charles Whibley that he has gone on reprinting: how, one asks, can Eliot have supposed that the too-familiar kind of accomplished "personal" and literary prose of which he offers us samples could impress us as justifying his estimate of Whibley? How can he have supposed that he could get such an estimate taken seriously by an intelligent public? The answer can only be that, forty years ago, Charles Whibley was a well-known figure, a current social literary value (a matter of accepted convention—I remember quarreling in a minor way with Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, who wanted me to be impressed by Whibley's essay on Swift), in an English social world of the "best people."

The importance for my theme of this aspect of what I have called Eliot's conventionality can be illustrated from his magazine, *The Criterion*. How, one asks, looking at the opening installment of Hugh Walpole's *The Old Ladies* in the issue for February 1926, can Eliot ever have thought anything by that industrious, utterly untalented, manufacturer of Book Society "classics" worth printing in a review with such a title and the accordant pretensions? The answer (apart from the fact that Eliot has never shown any intelligence about prose fiction) can only be that Walpole at that time was embarked on his campaign to get admitted to membership of inner "Bloomsbury." ("Hugh is so humble," one was told a little later by slightly embarrassed minor members, when one pressed them to explain the signal evidence of his success: that is, he made no effort to conceal his admiration, his unqualified, his satisfyingly adequate admiration, for Virginia Woolf as a creative genius.) That the first book-publication of *The Waste Land* was by the Hogarth Press one knew. What I myself was slow, I confess, to realize was that Eliot was as completely *of* that Bloomsbury world—in acceptance and (the necessary condition) loyalty or docility—as the memoirs and autobiographical matter by members and associated writers and Etonians that have come out subsequently have shown him to have been.

Yet the evidence provided by himself as critic and editor was plentiful enough. The absurd (and orthodox) over-estimate of Virginia Woolf implied in his references to her might seem to be a natural and spontaneous aberration, closely correlated with his unquestionably and profoundly personal prepossession against D. H. Lawrence (*"non seulement est elle civilisée, elle préfère la civilisation à la barbarie,"* "not only is she civilized, she prefers civilization to barbarism," he wrote in a "Letter" to *La Nouvelle Revue Française*). Yet, contemplating the strikingly unguarded and uncharacteristic rashness with which he indulges the prepossession in emphatic, righteous, and indefensible pronouncements of overtly damning intention at Lawrence's expense, we have to remind ourselves that in this prepossession too he had Bloomsbury with him; he was expressing in his boldness of ungrounded conviction the confident orthodoxy of that consciously dominant elite—which in this matter had with it the large ox-eyed world of Philistinism and moral conventionality it loved to think of itself as despising and shocking. And that same "Letter" in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* from which I have just quoted shows us the critic who so exalts Virginia Woolf offering the French intellectual public David Garnett as a significant writer, a master of English prose. Garnett of course was at that time established currency as such in the best circles in England, and that this should have been pos-

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sible illustrates notably both the power and the proclivity of Bloomsbury.

It is impossible to think of Garnett as a spontaneous taste of Eliot's; it is impossible that Eliot could have made the "pretty piffle" (Lawrence's kind enough dismissing phrase) of those pseudo-moral *contes* into significant art except as the hardly altogether unconscious—and the critically annulled—transmitter of the orthodoxy that had made Garnett a contemporary classic. Hardly unconscious—certainly not unconscious; but how conscious of being, as I have put it, critically annulled and a mere transmitter? It is perhaps (a distinguished mind being in question) the most disquieting aspect of the conventionality we are contemplating that we should be left unable to say. The impulse it represents is so radical that the surrender, the connivance, need not be fully conscious. Yet, reading the British Academy lecture on Milton (reprinted in this volume with, I see when I compare it with the reply that I—not, of course, challenged there by any actual mention of my name—made to the original, some unsignaled and very substantial omissions*), who can believe that the writer and lecturer could have been unaware of the felicity of touch, the tactics, the strategy, the phrasing, the whole thing, for the reassurance and ingratiation of a British Academy public?

And yet (again!) can one believe the critic unaware of the self-stultifying feebleness of this criticism as criticism, and of the way in which, for the reader who gives it the attention due to the thought of a distinguished poet-critic (thought about a matter of central relevance to the critic's achievement as a poet), it implicitly, in its equivocal kind of noble and sophisticated innocence, concedes all that one needs for putting the case against Milton that is ostensibly suffering refutation—to the confusion (the reviewers gleefully commented) of Eliot's too early admirers? Of course, neither the reviewers nor the British Academy audience noticed this effect of the lecture, any more than they noticed the related effect of a hardly disguised lack of interest in Milton and the argument on the part of the lecturer. And, to come to a further observation that has to be recorded when Eliot's "conventionality" is being appraised, one suspects that if as a critically articulate admirer of his achievement one pointed out this state of affairs to him, he might meet one's demonstration with something—oh! of a very refined and subtle equivocalness, of course—in the nature of a wink.

It is unpleasant to have to entertain this kind of suspicion, but there is no escaping it. Consider, for instance, that solemn, that hardly credible, discussion of Kipling's verse which is reprinted in the volume under review. It emanates, one told oneself (when it first came out) from the British Subject who used to write those letters to the *Times* about Stilton Cheese and the ordination of Bishops—which was not to say that he didn't suppose himself to be taking it seriously: such astonishing miscalculation couldn't be *mere* calculation. And yet, for a genuine admirer of Eliot, is it possible to believe that he expected such admirers to take this performance seriously? And if he didn't expect them to—and how, when reprinting it after all the disabusing commentaries he must have heard and read since 1941, *could* he?—what kind of look are they to divine in the critic's eye as meant for *them*? They will recall such things as the obituary on Robert Bridges that appeared in *The Criterion* or the ambiguous piece of correctness about A. E. Housman (the occasion being *The Name and Nature of Poetry*) that can be found there too.

I HAVE perhaps gone some way towards answering the question with which I opened: how is it possible for a book of criticism to be at once so distinguished and so unimportant? At any rate, I have done something to bring out the significance of that question as the form taken by one's summary comment on the book. One feels that one ought to be able to expect a book

*"Each item is substantially the same as on the date of its delivery or first publication."—T. S. Eliot, Preface. This one isn't.

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of Eliot's criticism to be important, to make a difference. And there is, as a matter of fact, a great deal of distinction in this book of a kind that, represented in quotation, suggests an impressive context. There are what one may take as authoritative formulations of important issues:

> It is, moreover, through the living authors that the dead remain alive.
>
> If we have no living literature we shall become more and more alienated from the literature of the past; unless we keep up continuity, our literature of the past will become more and more remote from us until it is as strange to us as the literature of a foreign people. For our language goes on changing, our way of life changes, under the pressure of material changes in our environment, in all sorts of ways, and unless we have those few men who combine an exceptionable sensibility with an exceptional power over words, our own ability, not merely to express, but even to feel any but the crudest emotions, will degenerate.

The essay from which these extracts come, "The Social Function of Poetry," is one of the more interesting in the book. If one asks oneself why one should feel that the promise they suggest of a disinterested play of strong and responsible critical thought, the duly influential expression of a mind courageously alive in the present, is not borne out, is notably not fulfilled either in the book as a whole or anywhere in it, one finds the answer in the reflections aroused by this sentence from the same essay, or by the paragraph in which it comes:

> I would even press my first point and say that if a poet gets a large audience very quickly, that is a rather suspicious circumstance: for it leads us to fear that he is not really doing anything new. . . .

Yes, one thinks, Auden—that was the major relevant case in Eliot's time. Auden's newness was of a kind that could be appreciated at once by a large public of British Academicians, acclaimers of Bridges' *The Testament of Beauty,* classical dons—poetry lovers in general, who had confidently rejected Eliot himself. Auden became almost overnight an accepted major poet, and for twenty years British schoolboys of literary bent were exceptional in intelligence or negativism or luck if they didn't believe that the great contemporary poets were Eliot, Auden, and Yeats.

But the importance of *not* confusing the glib modish novelty of the Audens with creative originality, and so stultifying one's "appreciation" of the Yeatses and the Eliots —that is an inescapable moral of Eliot's essay. To postulate, as the essay does, the effective existence of an elite capable of making, and insisting on, the distinction is to postulate the need for a strongly functioning contemporary criticism. And one remembers the *Criterion*—the great critical quarterly that is now an established legend—and that Eliot was its Editor. The legend (it is perhaps in bad taste, but it is certainly necessary, to say) bears no relation to the actuality. The actuality is fairly represented by the *Criterion's* performance of the function of criticism in respect of Auden and the Poetical Renascence of the early 1930's. Anyone who investigates the back files will see that, from the outset steadily onwards, the review pages of that Classicist, Anglo-Catholic, and Royalist organ were as unmistakably as those of the *New Statesman* (Socialist and egalitarian) at the disposal of the "gang" for its own purposes, which, in the nature of the case, were essentially anti-critical, so that Spender's status as a very distinguished poet, discussible as such along with Eliot and Yeats, was no more to be questioned there than Auden's. Speaking as one of the very small minority that was concerned in those days to insist, in published criticism, on the essential differences—those between real creative originality and what was represented by Auden and Spender (and in those days Day Lewis was a Modern Poet too), I can testify that to be known for such a bent was to have earned one's reward—there is no need to specify the modes of retributive treatment—in the *Criterion* as surely as in the *New Statesman* and the Sunday papers.

So far, then, was the *Criterion* from resisting the final triumph of coterie over the function of criticism. Its surrender, in fact, marks the end in our time of the possi-

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bility that an elite such as Eliot postulates might establish itself as a force in the British literary world and, a constant effective reminder of standards, be able to make itself felt and respected as something quite other than a coterie. The spirit of coterie is the enemy of the spirit of elite. Bloomsbury, of course, presented itself as an elite while actually promoting the spirit of coterie with a success that constitutes a major fact for the historian of literature and culture in Great Britain in the 20th century.

The success presented the "gang" (their own term—see Spender's autobiography) of the Poetical Renascence with the conditions of their astonishingly rapid arrival, their capture of the literary scene. The capture, in fact, was a succession, recognized and promoted by the veterans of the old Bloomsbury —the Bloomsbury of Keynes and the Woolfs; that is what we are actually told in the course of his naive autobiographical impartings by Spender, friend and protégé of Virginia Woolf, and launched in that milieu as a distinguished talent. How then could Eliot (known—see Spender and the others—by his abbreviated Christian name in that world) *not* play the part confidently expected of him? How should he insist—how can we with any conviction assume that it even occurred to him that he ought to insist—that, the *Criterion* being dedicated to the service of an important function, the Editor had a responsibility, one the discharge of which would inevitably entail an astringent play of criticism upon the Poetical Renascence, grievous offense to the pretensions of the "gang," and the implicit rallying of a disinterested and intelligent public, an elite, the indispensable "small audience," against the triumphant encroachments of the spirit of coterie?

He writes (here again) as if he believed that the *Criterion* stood for a serious attempt to maintain the critical function. If he believes, or thinks he believes, that, one can see why his references in the present volume to criticism and its importance should not convince us that they engage the context of strong thinking they ought, and why his handling of his themes, for all its distinction, should seem in general to lack some essential energy. An intelligent interest in criticism cannot be merely theoretical; it begins and ends in engagement, in actual discrimination and judgment, and cannot be for long very far away from them. Eliot as critic has in general been a not profoundly or wholly enough engaged one (a judgment that has its bearings on his creative achievement).

I HAVE been enforcing the criticism: conventionality—a criticism that, I have incidentally shown, is made, as one brings it against him, with a variety of forces; all related so essentially as to give point to the one term. And we can say that a critic more wholly *engaged* couldn't have been so prone to conventionality, in various senses, as we have seen Eliot to have been. There is a sense in which he is too much of an intellectual. To say this may sound like a very different criticism; yet I am pointing to a very closely related trait of the same man—pointing in fact, to what may perhaps be judged to be one of the more radical manifestations of the habit, the characteristic, that appears in the conventionality. What is meant by saying that Eliot is too much of an intellectual should be plain to anyone who looks through two or three volumes of the *Criterion* and, considering the impressive weightiness of the constituent numbers, asks what the typical make-up actually amounts to, and what relation it bears, or bore, to any sense of the real problem, the problem of asserting and vindicating the function of criticism—that problem as it must have appeared to an engaged and realizing mind, livingly aware of the state of things in England, and intent on a serious response to the challenge. It seems to me that there was nothing more adequate behind the *Criterion* than the general idea of a great European review; the idea as it might have been formed in (say) Irving Babbitt's lecture room. What Eliot learnt from Ezra Pound or Wyndham Lewis or the social-literary world in which he formed his notion of England didn't help him to anything better.

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When in the present volume he refers to the responsibilities of reviewing and the importance of having literary reviews, or explicitly discusses the characteristics and limitations of contemporary criticism, he gives no sign of recognizing our actual plight: the impossibility of maintaining an intelligent critical journal; the absence of an educated public (the "small audience") coherent and influential enough to be able to insist on the maintenance of serious standards in the places where the function of criticism is supposed to be nowadays mainly performed—the weeklies and the middle-class Sunday papers. It is hardly conceivable that the criticism of a mind that, for all its distinction, is capable of such a default should have the strength and importance that the distinction at best seems to promise. It will tend to be of such a kind as to cause the pupils of Desmond MacCarthy, and the Sunday reviewers in general, no disturbance or uneasiness. And actually they receive Eliot's criticism with acclaim, if sometimes with a suggestion of patronage; they pay tribute to a recognized distinction, while giving no sign of recognizing anything notably rarer or more to be prized or feared than what it is orthodoxy to think of as the talent of Desmond MacCarthy. That they can receive his criticism in that way is eloquent testimony to the lack of something that ought to have been there.

I MUST not however be taken to suggest that the defect is no more than a matter of what most directly and obviously relates to his "conventionality." We have it, as a characteristic weakness of critical thought, here, where he is writing about "Johnson as Critic and Poet."

> In our own day, the influence of psychology and sociology upon literary criticism has been very noticeable. On the one hand, these influences of social discipline have enlarged the field of the critic and have affirmed, in a world which otherwise is inclined to depreciate the importance of literature, the relations of literature to life. But from another point of view this enrichment has also been an impoverishment, for the purely literary values, the appreciation of good writing for its own sake, have become submerged when literature is judged in the light of other considerations.

What are "purely literary values"? I myself am firmly convinced that literature must be judged "as literature and not as another thing." Only when it is so judged can sociology and psychology learn from it what they have to learn. But to believe this is not, so far as I can see, to believe in "purely literary values." And the "appreciation of good writing for its own sake" seems to me, for all its plausibility, a phrase that covers a failure of thought: it reminds me of Desmond MacCarthy's pronouncing about *East Coker* in the *Sunday Times* that "Mr. Eliot has never *written* better" (written italicized by way of insisting that it *means* something), and Eliot's own judgment that "*Garnett l'emporte sur tous les prosateurs contemporains pour l'habileté technique de l'écriture*" ("In the technical skill of the writing Garnett surpasses all contemporary prose-writers.")—and his statement that he is not interested in what, in the *Cantos*, Pound says, but only in the way he says it. The quoted passage, in fact, reminds us that the critic is he who wrote "Tradition and the Individual Talent," with its astonishingly untenable account of the importance of literature and the relations of literature to life. That is, it is the critic whom some radical inner condition makes peculiarly weak in value-judgment.

The manifestation of that weakness in his critical thinking is especially apparent when, in this volume, he discusses his own plays. He says a good deal about the faults of *Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party*, but gives no sign at all that he is aware of the profounder, the essential, criticisms these works invite—the criticisms that express one's sharpened sense of the importance of literature, and therefore of the relation of literature to life. The discussion of drama in general suffers from the same weakness; the examination of the possibility and the practical problem of poetic drama comes from a mind in which the thinking about matters of form and technique hasn't the life, grapple, and force that critical thought cannot

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have apart from the habit of full engagement—the habit that manifests itself in the kind of preoccupation with value, significance, and responsibility to life that makes it impossible to talk about "purely literary values."

In fact, one cannot escape the sense that Eliot's discussion of his themes is at bottom an insidious way of not really facing the essential responsibility of a critic. And perhaps enough has now been said about the effect of such characteristic things as "What Is a Classic?": the curious sense one has of a strenuous *academic* quality; the sense of an intensity of intellectual energy, devoted by the critic and exacted of the reader, incommensurate with any upshot of defined, organized, and profitable thought.

TWO POEMS ABOUT EZRA POUND

Paul Potts

I HAVE waited to ask you this.
I could not ask you in prison.
I waited until you were free.

But why, why did you let them use
Your name and your greatness
As so many pennies to put
Into the meters of their gas machines.
You know what they did with their gas,
Your gas, Ezra Pound.

The crime was too big.
There are no extenuating circumstances.
You should have known better.

In Jerusalem I asked
The ancient Hebrew poets to forgive you,
And what would Walt Whitman have said
And Thomas Jefferson?

Dannie Abse
(For Paul Potts)

IN SOHO, you repeated the question.
In the square mile of unoriginal sin,
where the fraudulent neon lights haunt,
but cannot hide, the dinginess of vice,
the jeans and sweater boys spoke of Pound.

The chee-chee bums in Torino's laughed and
the virgins of St. Martin's School of Art.
The corner spivs, with their Maltese masks,
loitered for the two o'clock result,
and those, in the restaurants of Greek Street,
eating income tax did not hear the laugh.

You, of all people, asked the question.
The strip lighting of Soho did not fuse;
no blood trickled from a certain book
down the immaculate shelves of Zwemmers.
But the circumcised did not laugh.
The swart nudes in the backrooms put on clothes
and the doors of the French pub closed.

Free now (and we praise this) he may answer.
Bars cross the jail of your exercise book
between bare words drenched with painful ink
the warders of an establishment will not print.

Gentle Gentile, you asked the question.
Pound did not hear the raw Jewish cry,
the populations committed to the dark
when he muttered through microphones
of murderers. He, not I, must answer.

Because of the structures of a beautiful poet
you ask the man who is less than beautiful,
and wait in the public neurosis of Soho
in the liberty of loneliness for an answer.

In the chromium bars they talked of Ezra Pound
and excused the silences of an old man,
saying there is so little time between
the parquet floors of an institution
and the boredom of the final box.

Why, Paul, if that ticking distance between
was merely a journey long enough
to walk the circumference of a Belsen
Walt Whitman would have been eloquent,
and Thomas Jefferson would have cursed.

PAUL POTTS has published a book of poems, *Instead of a Sonnet*, and contributes to the British journals. DANNIE ABSE's writings are known to COMMENTARY readers.

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IS THERE AN "ARAB CIVILIZATION"?

Islam and Arabism

A. G. HORON

ISLAM arose in Arabia. But from the ethnographic standpoint Arabia proper comprised at first only the Nejd and the Hejaz, the vast desert lands of the nomadic Bedouins in the center and northwest of the Arabian peninsula. It is the Greeks and Romans who stretched the name of Arabia until it was made to include the less barren south of the peninsula—"Arabia Felix," i.e. the country from which frankincense came and which was inhabited by sedentary, relatively civilized peoples. However, the peoples of Arabia Felix neither were nor called themselves Arabs, and their languages—Sabaean, Minean, and related dialects, either extinct or still spoken today —are more closely akin to the Semitic tongues of Ethiopia than to Arabic.

During the formative period of Islam, Judaism still played a cultural and even a political role both in the Orient and in Africa. The last pre-Islamic state in the Arabian peninsula was the kingdom of the Himyarites (who were the heirs of the Sabaeans and lived in what is now Yemen and Hadramaut), which had become Jewish in religion before being destroyed by the Christian Ethiopians around 525 C.E., some forty or fifty years prior to the birth of Mohammed. The fall of the Himyarite kingdom was followed by a period of chaos, tribal unrest, and migration, the memory of which is preserved in Moslem tradition under the name of *jahaliya* (time of "ignorance" or "barbarism"). In North Africa, too, there were in the 7th century several important groups of Berber "Jews," or rather Judaizers, notably among the powerful Zenata tribes, who inflicted some resounding defeats on the Arab invaders and thus delayed the progress of Islam in the West until the beginning of the 8th century. Even after the triumph of Islam the Jews retained, or regained for some time, their economic and political importance in several regions around the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins. One of the great powers of the early Middle Ages, the empire of the Khazars (a people akin to the Turks), which dominated the southern and eastern parts of what is now European Russia, professed Judaism from the 8th to the 10th centuries.

In the early 7th century, Jews and Judaizers were still numerous and influential in the Arabian peninsula itself. Mohammed (born about 570) belonged to one of the very few merchant and urban communities of Arabia proper, and at first believed his mission to consist as much in providing guidance to the Jews as in converting the Bedouins. Two events transformed emergent Islam* into a truly indigenous sect: the hostility, or at least the indifference, of the Jews in Arabia toward the new prophet, and the blow suffered by Judaism throughout the East as a result of the disastrous outcome of the ferocious duel fought be-

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IN A time when Arab nationalism represents an important international issue, and the Arab nationalists evoke the Arab past, it becomes a question of some moment as to who the Arabs really were, and what they actually accomplished on the world historical scene. A. G. HORON has spent half a lifetime studying, writing, and lecturing (in English, French, and Hebrew) on the interlocking problems of Semitic history and current Middle East affairs. The present essay is the condensation of a chapter in his forthcoming book on "Pan-Arabism and the Mediterranean." Mr. Horon was formerly associate professor at the Asia Institute of New York, and a contributor to the Encyclopedia Hebraica of Jerusalem.

**Islam* means "conversion, surrender" (to Allah's will); a *Moslem* is "he who surrenders, who accepts Islam."

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tween the Byzantine and the Iranian (Sassanid) empires. At an earlier stage of the seesaw struggle—around 614, upon the approach of the Iranian armies—the Jews of Palestine had risen in revolt against the Byzantines; but their hopes for a restoration had come to nothing, and by 625 the Byzantine counter-offensive was in full swing; the final victory of the Christian power (628), climaxed by frightful reprisals, broke the back of Palestinian Jewry and imperiled the principal centers of Jewish life, which lay then in Mesopotamia.

These dates should be borne in mind in order to understand Mohammed's turning away from Judaism, his literal about-face. At the time of the *hejira*—the "emigration" of Mohammed and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622—he still was a Judaizer and the Moslems prayed facing toward Jerusalem; but from about 625 on they turned toward Mecca in prayer—this marked the beginning of a purely Arab Islam.

II

THE historic role of this *Arab* Islam consisted in bringing together, for a brief span—just before and after the death of the Prophet in 632—many of the anarchic tribes of Bedouins who had once been the vassals, or clients, or hirelings of the Himyarite kingdom or of the Byzantine and Sassanid empires. However, as a result of the Moslem conquests, the absorption of foreign elements into Islam became so great that the new religion ceased to be a specifically Arab movement.

Thus, if primitive Islam can be defined as an exiguous form of Judaism grafted onto local pagan traditions and placed within easier reach of the Bedouin mentality, this definition no longer holds true after the second or third Moslem generation. For then Islam began to develop and split up along lines which would soon have little to do with Arabia and the Arabs. Even before the end of the 7th century, it becomes essential not to confuse the terms "Arab" and "Moslem"—and this despite the persistence of Arabic as the sacred tongue of the new world religion. Such transformations of the original basic character of a religion, which sever it from the ethnic environment in which it originated, are not at all uncommon. Christianity began as a Jewish sect, yet it became the creed of the Roman world and then of the entire Western world. And Buddhism, born in India, after a number of centuries ceased being Indian and took roots in Central Asia and the Far East.

Impressed by the spectacular, almost miraculous expansion of primitive Islam, modern European historians first sought its explanation in an alleged outburst of Bedouin religious fanaticism, as well as in an imagined drying up of the Arabian peninsula and a consequent "wave" of mass migration. But there has been no notable change of any kind in the climate of Arabia within the historical period; and a better knowledge of the facts shows that most of the Arabs of the 7th century were quite indifferent in matters of religion, with a few individual exceptions; indeed, the nomadic Bedouins have remained to the present day notoriously uninterested in religious questions. Therefore, if the reason for the success of primitive Islam is to be sought among the Arabs, it should be found in some more tangible causes, such as the social and economic structure of Mohammed's Arabia and the immediately preceding history of the peninsula as a whole.

The fall of the Himyarite kingdom, coinciding as it did with the beginning of one of the worst crises yet suffered by civilization in the Orient, had destroyed what little political organization there was in the Arabian peninsula, together with the caravan trade on which it rested. Left to their own devices, the Bedouins—half-starved shepherds, camel drivers, and marauders—had no resource but brigandage. This they carried on among their various clans, according to the time-honored custom of internecine guerrilla, and later on also upon a much larger scale—when occasion arose and a pretext was offered. The pretext happened to be a religious one, Islam, and the occasion was the exhaustion of the civilized world

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following the endless wars between the great powers of East and West. The citizens of Mecca, Medina, and the few other Arabian townships were a mere handful of settled people, amid the unruly nomadic majority of the Bedouin tribes. But the Meccans were crafty enough to realize that Bedouin anarchy could be somehow channeled and controlled by the novel means of Islam. Abu-Bekr and especially Omar (murdered in 644)—the first two successors of the Prophet but almost the only ones having real authority as his "lieutenants" or *caliphs*—became organizers of forays on the grand scale. The aim of these raids was booty and prestige, not territorial acquisition. No one had foreseen the political consequences of Arab raiding.

III

From the very start, the decisive factors and circumstances operated not inside, but outside Arabia—in those thickly populated lands of ancient sedentary civilization which were then provinces of the Byzantine and Iranian empires. In Syria and Egypt, a majority of the native Aramaic- and Coptic-speaking masses belonged to the Monophysitic church, which was heretical in the eyes of both Rome and Constantinople. While suffering under the Byzantine yoke and hating the Greeks, these Monophysites also feared the zeal of the Sassanid "fire-worshipers," devotees of the Persian god Ahura-Mazda. Similar conditions prevailed in Mesopotamia, a mostly Aramaic-speaking country under Iranian domination (Ctesiphon, the Sassanid capital, was on the Tigris). The native mass of "heretical" (Nestorian) Christians, and a numerous, and well-organized "Babylonian" Jewry, had reason to loathe their Iranian suzerain, yet even greater reason to fear the Byzantine emperor.

Thus pretty much everywhere, from the Nile to the Tigris, the newly arrived bands of Moslems, little given to proselytizing (contrary to modern legend) and as yet neutral in religious matters, were welcomed as the lesser evil. Both the Byzantine and the Sassanid auxiliary troops were made up, on the Arabian borders, largely of pagan or superficially Christianized Arabs. Poorly paid, these mercenaries deserted en masse, thus becoming the first recruits to Islam outside Arabia. In such circumstances, warfare was often little more than a formality. Provincial authorities and local communities reached direct agreement with the Arabs, granting them political suzerainty and financial aid in return for guarantees of communal and religious freedom. Palestine and Syria, then Iraq and Upper Mesopotamia, and finally Egypt gave themselves up, conditionally and (so it was thought) temporarily, to the enemies of their own oppressors. This is the real secret of the Moslem "miracle."

The Moslem conquest, or rather occupation, of the countries between the Tigris and the Nile was accomplished in a few years, during the lifetime of Omar. It completely changed the character of Islam. For a brief spell Islam became a political force centered upon Damascus and wielded by the Arab commander in Syria, Moawiya, who was later to found the Omayyad dynasty by taking over the caliphate (660/661). The result was that Arabia, more divided than ever and drained of its best warriors, fell back into utter insignificance. Its central role had lasted a mere fifteen or, at most, twenty-five years.* The Arabian chapter of Islamic history, whatever its tremendous consequences outside Arabia, turned out to be an episode without deep cause or real future. At the peak of his fortunes, just before he died, Mohammed hardly controlled more than the territory of Hejaz; the attempts of the first caliphs to unify Arabia proper miscarried; and though the Arabian peninsula quickly accepted Islam, it never formed a political whole, for the states in the south and southeast (Yemen, Oman, etc.) retained their inde-

*From 630 (submission of Mecca to Mohammed) to 644 (murder of Omar); or at most to 655 (murder of Othman, the last caliph of Medina). Thereafter the seat of the caliphate ceased to be even nominally in Arabia.

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pendence and the Bedouin tribes their anarchic autonomy. Our "historical" maps which show this entire peninsula unified under Mohammed, or ruled by the Omayyads and later by the Abbassids, are the products of fantasy.

Nor were the ruling Arabs outside Arabia more than a handful, a few thousand people, Meccans for the most part, who formed an exalted governing caste, but a caste which from the second generation on was incorporated into the structure of the lands it governed by intermarriage and every kind of commingling. This upper class was finally slaughtered, almost to a man, in the factional wars and dynastic struggles of the 7th and 8th centuries. On the other hand, the Bedouin tribes—those who made up the bulk of the first invaders, and those who now swarmed in to get their share of the booty—remained always a foreign body. One should not exaggerate their numbers: a total of a few tens of thousands of fighting men, a few hundred thousand people if one counts their dependents—such is the size of the Bedouin invasions which followed in the wake of Moslem conquests. These Bedouins were a troublesome lot; they had to be segregated, pensioned off, and closely watched in semi-military camps: Kufa, Bassora in Iraq, Fostat in Egypt, and later Kairouan in Tunisia, etc. Moreover, they were used as the vanguard in new raiding expeditions, which the Arab potentates partly undertook just to rid themselves of their obnoxious kinsmen. Very few survived the forays of the 7th century, which ranged as far as the Caspian Sea and the Atlas Mountains. Properly speaking, there was no Arab colonization, and the Bedouin contribution to the motley ethnography of the Moslem world remained infinitesimal; Oriental and Mediterranean societies were not really Arabized.

ENCAMPED from the Nile to the Tigris in countries which were at that time among the wealthiest on earth, and supported by unhoped-for resources which, however, they could only use with relative moderation for fear of antagonizing the more massive and cohesive peoples among whom they dwelt, the Arabs quickly began to look to new fields of conquest. Despite its improved organization, this second phase of Moslem expansion met with more obstacles than the first; it was resisted all the way from Iran to Turkestan and the Indus, and from North Africa to beyond the Pyrenees. As against the few years needed for the purely Arab episode, this second or international stage of early Islamic conquest lasted approximately a hundred years: from the invasion of Iran in 641 to the battle of Poitiers in 732—when the Moslem tide reached its highest mark in the West—and to the final collapse, in 743, of the Omayyad caliphate in the East. The extension of the new religion over so vast an area spelled the doom of the weak Arab minority; the triumph of Islam in the great region between Central Asia and the Atlantic signified, by the middle of the 8th century, the victory of provincial, indigenous elements over the foreign Arabs. The latter, insofar as they survived at all, became mere figureheads or venerable ciphers, manipulated by contending Moslem forces which were no longer Arab in fact.

The Arabs, lost in the immensity of their success, had never really cooperated with, or even managed to tolerate, one another. Discord and civil wars never ceased to rage among them even for a moment. Regional factions—the Hejazian, the Syrian, the Iraqian, etc.—were pitted against each other. Clans carried on their bitter feuds with rival clans: "Yemenites" of South Arabian extraction fought the self-styled Ishmaelites or "true" Arabs. Sects warred upon sects: Shiites who supported the "legitimate" successors of Mohammed rose against the so-called orthodox Sunnites, who recognized the usurping caliphs, and contended with the Kharijites who, being anarchists on principle, recognized no one. Emirs quarreled with emirs: military commanders or gubernatorial satraps supported or opposed the authority of the various caliphs, or fought among themselves over the delegation of the caliphate's nominal powers. Last

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but not least, every caliph was constantly obliged to fight other caliphs or pretenders. After the death of Mohammed, his son-in-law Ali and the latter's descendants intrigued incessantly against the Medinese caliphs, battled with the Omayyads, and defied the Abbassids; whereas the presence of a single Omayyad survivor in Spain was sufficient cause (or pretext) for the creation of a separatist emirate in Cordova, which later became an independent Moorish caliphate.

Amid this chaos, even at the most glorious moments of the so-called Arab empire, there was no trace of central government, except in theory. The leaders who stayed longest in power were those who massacred with least compunction their brother Bedouins. The fact is that the conquering Arabs literally destroyed each other as a people. The dynasties that endured for a while were those that appeased their non-Arab subjects. The last Omayyads of Damascus, when they were unwise enough to attempt the creation of an Arab state, provoked immediate universal hostility, followed in a few decades by their extermination. Under the earlier Arab rule in the Levant, from about 640 to the beginning of the 8th century, all branches of administration, which had been inherited from the Byzantine-Sassanid period, remained essentially native in personnel and language (chiefly Greek or Aramaic). The Omayyads Abd el-Malik (685-705) and Walid (705-715) were the first to coin money inscribed in Arabic. Amid ceaseless revolts, they struggled to control the administrative machinery by introducing Arabic into public affairs. But their motley empire was not thereby unified; each province merely became bilingual or trilingual. Anarchy, worse than ever, flared up in 715-724, and the final explosion came two decades later, after a brief respite in the early years of Hisham (724-743).

Following this a new caliphate was established under the half-Arab, half-Persian Abbassids, truly a recreation of Sassanid pre-Islamic theocracy. The Abbassid caliphs soon enough became the prisoners of their Iranian supporters and advisers, and then the captives of their own bodyguard—the Turkish emirs and their slave soldiers. No Abbassid was ever free to act as an Arab (assuming that he felt so inclined), not even Harun al-Rashid, the celebrated contemporary of Charlemagne, whose very capital, Baghdad, bore a Persian name. Similar conditions prevailed in the African and Moorish Occident.

To sum up: Arab divisions and Moslem slogans were simply taken over by non-Arabs, and thus gave expression to cultures, religious movements, and political rivalries which had little or nothing to do with Arabia. The old ethno-geographic entities re-emerged, but superficially coated with Arabism: Andalusia (i.e. Spain); Morocco (ancient Mauretania) and Tunisia (the formerly Punic Africa); eternal Egypt; the Syro-Palestinian Levant; a Lower Mesopotamian Iraq; Persia proper; a Farther Iran or Khorassan; and the Hither India of the Punjab, etc. Or, new formations appeared, entirely unconnected with the Bedouin episode—notably the various Turkish and Berber empires. Contrary to a widespread belief, Islam, far from signifying the Arabization of Africa and the Orient, was so to speak the means by which the Africans and Orientals got rid of the Arabs.

IV

Even before the end of the Arab conquests, a hundred years after the *hejira,* the non-Arab proselytes to Islam—though still a minority among the population of most countries—were already far more numerous than the immigrants from Arabia. (Today the nomad Bedouins together with the authentic Arabs among the settled peoples hardly make up more than 2 per cent of Islam's world-wide total or around 350 million; should we count all Arabic-speaking Moslems, of all dialects and origins, as Arabs, they would still represent rather less than 15 per cent of Islam.)

The *mawali** or neophytes—individually and later as entire peoples—created inter-

*Originally the "clients" of an Arab tribe or faction.

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national Islam and thereby defeated Arabism. With the triumph of the Abbassids (743-750), their victory was complete. From about 750 on, for twelve out of the thirteen centuries that have elapsed since the death of Mohammed, the genuine Arabs played no part in history, except as figureheads for other forces or prowlers of the deserts of Arabia and the Sahara. What, then, were the non-Arab forces that acted on the Islamic stage around the Mediterranean basin?

In Africa, from the epoch of Islamization to the period of the Crusades, the three major forces were represented by the following:

1. Egypt, which had remained largely Christian (and to some extent Jewish) and where the Coptic language survived. Starting with the 9th century, however, the land of the Nile was governed in turn by Turks, by Arabo-Berber Shiites—the Fatimids from the *Maghreb* (a North African "West")—by Kurds (Saladin and his Ayyubid dynasty), and finally by Turks again (the first Mamelukes).

2. The cities of the Maghreb, notably those of Tunisia, which were of Punic (that is, Canaanite) origin; they had become Arabized in speech and Islamized in religion—except for the still numerous Jews, and many native Christians who held on for several centuries.

3. Finally, and chiefly, the Berbers, who were Moslems in their own often dissenting fashion, and who spoke the Berber tongue in their vast majority.

Farther to the west, in Spain, Arabic served as a *lingua franca* for all peoples and religions. But on the whole, the peninsula remained Romano-Iberian, though in part it had become "Moorish," that is Arabo-Berber. Yet genuine Arabs were always very few, even in Andalusia proper. The great empires of the Almoravids and Almohads which dominated the Maghreb and established themselves astride Africa and Spain (11th-13th centuries) were purely Berber; the lesser "Saracenic" principalities that ruled Tunisia, Sicily, and the Central Mediterranean (9th-10th centuries), were half-Berber, half-Arab, like the Moors of Spain. In the east of Africa the Arabo-Berber caliphate of the Fatimids—possibly the greatest power in Moslem Africa—was created under the Shiite banner by a 10th-century Berber tribe, the Ketama from Algerian Kabylia. However, this caliphate was destined to become Egyptian (the Fatimids are the actual founders of Cairo), and it stayed Egyptian, despite occasional extensions into the coastlands of the Levant.

In Asia, the essentially non-Arab Abbassid caliphate of Baghdad lasted only from 750 to about 850; its disintegration as a temporal (if not as a spiritual) power started well before the end of the 9th century. The dynasties which in the 10th and 11th centuries succeeded it on the secular level were purely Iranian. These in turn were superseded by Turkish rulers. The event that set off the First Crusade was the threat posed by the sudden growth of the mighty if ephemeral empire of the Seljuk Turks. Previously, an uneasy equilibrium had been reached in the Levant between the Byzantines and Fatimids, wherein the Arab princelings of Aleppo and Mossul found themselves in the paradoxical situation of defending the independence of districts which were essentially Aramean and in good part Christian, or otherwise non-Moslem. But they too were soon subdued by the Seljuks, and then by the Crusaders. The latter found themselves facing not Arabs but Turkish hordes, warring dynasts and tribal chieftains (the "Atabegs"), and also the motley forces of Fatimid Egypt.

Saladin, the great conqueror of the Crusaders, was himself a Kurd (and therefore an "Indo-European"); and the nondescript Ayyubid empire (about 1200), of which he was the founder, defies all ethnic classification, as does the Mameluke empire which succeeded it. Both had Egypt for a base and the Turk for a sword—this is about all that can be said of them.

V

The 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries saw the destruction of native forces to the south and east of the Mediterranean and

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the ruin of ancient lands which to this day have not recovered from the catastrophe. Crusades and counter-crusades decimated Oriental Christendom, broke up the Moorish civilization of Spain, and dispersed the Jews once more around the Mediterranean basin. The terrible Mongol invasions under the successors of Genghis Khan completed the work of extermination. For three hundred years the Levant served as a battlefield for the contending Mamelukes, Tamerlane's Tartars, Ottoman Turks, and Turco-Persians. Finally, in the early 16th century, the Levant fell into the hands of the Ottoman sultan-caliphs, the political heirs of Byzantium.

The Ottoman Turks, who misruled Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, looked down on the Levantines and despised the Arabs, to the point of disregarding the main tenet of the caliphate, though they themselves professed to be strict Sunnites. (According to orthodox doctrine, a caliph, either "legitimate" or "usurping," had to be at the very least a member of the Meccan tribe of Qoreish, if not of its Hashemite clan, which was the clan of the Prophet.*) The sacrilege represented by the Turkish caliphate evoked only indifference, even from the orthodox section of the Moslem world. Arabism was thus losing its last symbol of prestige, its quality of an Islamic fetish. Moreover, except in matters of religion, literary Arabic also fell more and more into neglect. At the court of Selim, of Soliman the Magnificent, and of their successors (even until our own 20th century), Persian was cultivated instead, Latin, and later on French.

From the Sahara to the Eurasian steppes, the Sublime Porte was now the only major power. Europe trembled before the Great Turk, and North Africa—whose fate is inseparable from that of the Levant—either passed into the Ottoman political orbit or fell into chaos. Morocco withdrew into itself, while the "Barbary States" became under Ottoman guidance a lair of international piracy. Such conditions prevailed well into the 19th century, when the decay and fall of the Ottoman empire permitted Europe again to intervene decisively in the southern and eastern Mediterranean.

These hundreds of years of desolation (from the 13th to the 19th centuries) gave the Bedouins one more chance to play a role—a negative one. For during this period additional nomadic tribes from Arabia infiltrated little by little into the formerly prosperous but now devastated regions of settlement and created—more effectively than any change of climate might have done—that desert landscape which suits the Bedouin way of life.

The great Moslem historian of the Berbers, Ibn-Khaldun, a Hispano-African scholar and gentleman of the 14th century, paints a striking picture of the camel-riding Bedouins—the only true Arabs he recognizes. Their presence, he writes, is incompatible with any form of civilization; their barbarous speech is shocking to the ears of a cultured Moor; spoliation and degradation accompanies their parasitic way of life.

All the uprooted, discontented and ne'er-do-well Moslems and non-Moslems of every description (Berber pastoralists in Algeria or elsewhere along the Sahara; rebellious Druzes, Kurds, and other sectarians or clansmen in the Levant; adventurers, fugitives, dissenters, from the Balkans, Turkey, the Caucasus, etc., etc.)—all more enterprising and better equipped than the Bedouins—banded together or fought each other in a permanent state of lawlessness, abetted by the impotent tolerance or the self-seeking complicity of pashas, beys, deys, and other local Ottoman authorities. Amid this unending chaos, the less disorganized groups of sedentary people had no other recourse but to bar themselves in their impoverished towns, villages, or oases and conduct a passive—occasionally active—resistance against the anarchy without. Such were the Kabyles in the Atlas, the Moorish exiles from Spain, the Mozabites; such also, in Egypt, the Islamized peasants ("fellaheen") and Chris-

*The Omayyads were Qoreishites, though not Hashemites; whereas the Abbassids *were* Hashemites, like the Alids or Fatimids whom they had managed to supersede.

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tian Copts; the Catholic Maronites in Lebanon, often allied with the Druzes; the semi-pagan Nosairians ("Alawites") of coastal Syria; the "Assyrian" Christians of Kurdistan; the Shiites of Iraq; the Jews, both the natives of Asia and Africa, and the refugees from Spain; and many more communities, whose ethno-religious traditions and—quite frequently—languages were not of Arabian origin.

VI

Such is the political and social history of the Arabs since Islam. But what about the cultural aspects of their past? The so-called "Arab" civilization was extinguished many centuries ago. However, when it shone during the early Middle Ages, in exactly what sense was it Arab? This word is highly ambiguous. In the Middle Ages, too, there was a "Latin" culture which was Latin in its literary language but hardly in anything else. The coeval culture which is now labeled "Arab" (though formerly one used to call it Moorish or Saracenic) is something equally difficult to define, and even more complex. Like our European or Western civilization, it was international and interdenominational. The Arabs had an exceedingly small part in it; even the imprint of Islam, however deep, was not, on the whole, decisive. Many other traditions, Judaic and Graeco-Roman, pagan and Christian, Oriental and Occidental, stemming from antiquity or arising in the Middle Ages themselves, exercised, in their totality, a more decisive influence on "Arab" civilization.

Should we then call this civilization "Arab" only because its language was Arabic? The facts are not as simple as that; many other tongues contributed to the culture of the period and region under consideration. In the nearer and the farther East alike, the Aramaic of Oriental Christians and Jews, the Persian tongue used by Iranian, Turkish, and Indian Moslems, and several other idioms, held a place no less important than that of Arabic. In Asia, in Africa, and along the Mediterranean this epoch witnessed the golden age of Persian poetry, the beginnings of Turkish literature, a flowering of "Syriac" (i.e. Christian Aramaic) writings, a renaissance of Hebrew letters, and a final Coptic production. Written Arabic owed only its barest origin to the Arabs. Its development and enrichment as a "classical" medium of expression was the work of grammarians who flourished *after* the hundred years of Arab dominance. These scholars were Persians, Arameans, Jews, Moors, etc., very seldom Arabs. The same remark applies to most of the writers in Arabic. They were no more Arabs for having couched many of their writings in Arabic (the international language of scholarship in their day) than Duns Scotus or Dante Alighieri were Romans for having written so abundantly in medieval Latin. Among all the many authors there is hardly one Bedouin. No wonder: the great period of Arabic literature did not begin before the 8th or even the 9th century, by which time very little was left of the original conquerors, whereas the Arabic language had become a medium of communication used by the elites in countries between India and the Atlantic. (The mass of the peoples continued to speak their own vernaculars, or to develop new vernaculars more or less derived from Arabian dialects.)

However, Arabic, the language of the Koran and the Moslem religion, is the only reality to which our modern notion of an "Arab civilization" could be attached. Indeed, the Koran, which was composed in Medina after the death of the Prophet, is the one and only Book of the Arabs. Pre-Islamic Arabs had no written literature, and their brief and trivial inscriptions, mostly funerary, give evidence of a much lower level of culture than that of their non-Arab neighbors in the peninsula, the Sabaeans and kindred peoples. In later times, the only work of belles-lettres in Arabic to attain world-wide fame, the *Thousand and One Nights*, had nothing particularly Arab about it. It is a compendium of Oriental folklore and light entertainment: Persian, Indian, even Chinese; Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Judaic, etc. These "Arabian Nights" are set

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in all climes of the Orient except Arabia. With regard to other aspects of culture, not linguistic or purely literary, it is noteworthy that both masters and workmen, teachers and pupils, were in nearly all cases non-Arabs, and that the sources, methods, procedures, and styles were of non-Arabian origin, deriving mostly from Oriental and Mediterranean antiquity. Thus the famous "Mosque of Omar" (which does not date from Omar but from the early 8th century) was built on the site of the Temple of Solomon by architects and craftsmen none of whom were Arabs. And the Arabic version of Aristotle—which contributed so much to the shaping of medieval Moslem, Christian, and Judaic thought—was the work of Christian-Aramean translators and commentators who were often Judeo-Spaniards. For even the celebrated "Arab philosophy" is a complete misnomer. Its great authorities were Iranians* like Avicenna (Ibn-Sinna), Turco-Iranians like Al-Farabi, Moors like Averroes (Ibn-Roshd), or Spanish Jews like Avicebron (Ibn-Gabirol), and, above all, Maimonides.

*Al-Kindi, "Philosopher of the Arabs," provides an exception. This Iraqi scholar was of genuinely Arabian origin, whence his traditional nickname.

The contribution of true Arabs to this falsely styled Arab civilization is therefore meager; in theology, a minimum; in the humanities, still less; in the sciences, almost nothing; in the arts, absolutely nothing. "Arabian" architecture is Byzantine, Persian, Levantine, Moorish. The "Arabic" numerals are Hindu (though the principle of the zero seems to go back to the Sumerians). Even the "Arab" horse is of Syrian or Syro-Mesopotamian breed (but domesticated first on the steppes of Eurasia). Only the dromedary—perhaps†—is Arabian, together with the landscape which befits it. For, truly, the void from which Arabism sprang remains its sole creation. As a well-informed Englishman, a former governor of Sinai, once remarked: the "sons of the desert" deserve more properly to be called "fathers of the desert."**

†Yet this too is doubtful. The first domestication of the dromedary, like that of the two-humped Bactrian camel, may have taken place somewhere on the northeastern confines of Iran. As to systematic camel raising in Arabia, it started toward the end of the Bronze Age (about the 13th century B.C.) among Midianites and other south Semitic tribes. But these were more closely related to the Hebrews than to even the pre-Koranic Arabs.

**C. S. Jarvis, *Three Deserts*, p. 161.

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AN AMERICAN FAIRY TALE

A Story

DELMORE SCHWARTZ

THIS is a fairy tale. And it is a success story. It is a story which is not only full of goodness and beauty, but it is also a true story. It is full of purity, innocence, and happiness. Since it is the kind of experience which could only occur in America and the kind of a story which has and must have a happy ending, it shows that America has to be discovered again and again by everyone in America, for America is always new and always full of the unknown and undiscovered.

Melvin Smith was a prosperous businessman. He was a manufacturer of scholastic jewelry and thus his prosperity was comparatively stable because whenever a young boy or girl was graduated from high school or college, the parents felt that it was a matter of pride to congratulate their progeny by presenting them with a scholastic ring or some other form of scholastic jewelry as a reward and as a token of their progress in higher education.

His wife, Naomi Smith, was a strong and domineering woman who had helped her husband in business from the very start, when he was very poor; and she had become an equal and far from silent partner, as soon as the business became successful.

Melvin Smith wanted his son to be his junior partner as soon as he was graduated from high school. But Paul asked his father to give him just one year at college. And since so many other boys were also going to college, it was difficult to deny Paul's desire. The father's feeling for his son was a very strong one, for he thought of him as a part of himself, refreshed, renewed, youthful once more. He felt almost as intensely about his son as he felt about his own body when he had a toothache, or an upset stomach. There were two other children, Mildred—but she was a girl and thus did not satisfy the father's need—and Howard—but he was just a little boy, and the father was only able to think of him as the baby of the family.

Paul went to a Midwestern university, for it was only by going out of town that he was able to believe that he was really going to college as he had fondly imagined it. He was unhappy there, since he was afraid of girls. This was the one remaining dreg or drag of his shyness. In all other things he made his voice heard, but he thought that he was too plain for girls to like him very much. He was plain, but not repellent, as he supposed, and when he asked a dormitory friend if any girl would ever really love him, the friend thought that Paul must be joking. Then his friend perceived that Paul was not joking, that he awaited an answer fearful that his doubts would be confirmed. Hence the friend sought to explain to Paul that most girls were not really interested in good-looking men, they wanted something else, a sense of power, or a sense of importance, for the sake of their unborn children. But Paul would not believe him. He thought that his friend was just trying to reassure him.

"You just like to cheer up your friends," Paul declared, self-convinced and self-dismayed. Some three years before this time, having been told that one grew to look like the objects one looked at a great deal, he

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A NEW collection of short stories by DELMORE SCHWARTZ, including this one, is scheduled for future publication by Doubleday; earlier, the same publisher will bring out a volume of new and selected poems covering the years 1938-58, of which COMMENTARY has already printed a group (May 1958), to be followed by several more in one of our forthcoming issues.

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had purchased a bust of Apollo, placed it in his bedroom, looked at it as much as possible for the next few months, and obtained no results.

Paul did not know that his exuberance and his bouncing, exciting, delightful vitality made him attractive to girls. What happened on dates was that he rushed to make amorous overtures, he rushed for fear of rejection, and when his haste was criticized, he concluded that was an absolute judgment and refusal.

DURING the first year at this Midwestern university, Paul became known to the other students, and in fact he was loved as a delightful fantast who did many hilarious things. He was arrested for drunkenness and he argued with the policeman and the judge that they had no right to judge him because they had studied neither Plato's *Republic,* nor the works of D. H. Lawrence, where the necessity of spontaneity and wholeness of being was shown to be an imperative of nature, an imperative blocked and frustrated by our industrial civilization, thus forcing all who were intelligent and sensitive to take up hard liquor and sprees. No one really knew what he was saying, but it seemed to some charming and to some hilarious.

And when he walked up the steps of the library with his crony Sylvester, who like him came from New York, and when Sylvester asked him to speak in a lower voice, if he used four-letter words (Sylvester was more sensitive than Paul to conventional mores), Paul responded by denouncing the conventions and the squeamishness of gentility, of academic institutions, of the entire middle class.

"I face the facts," he shouted to Sylvester, "I use four-letter words because existence is full of four-letter facts and phenomena! I refuse to be an ostrich! And I don't care if all the nervous prudes shudder when they hear FOUR! FOUR! FOUR! As for me, I like it very much, I find it delightful. It is delicious. It is most enjoyable. FORE! FORE! FORE!"

When, during the worst part of the great depression and during the year before the New Deal began, Paul Smith began to become very much interested in Marxism, he became a member of the student political group which was called YPCL, or Young People's Communist League. Voluble and dogmatic as ever, Paul argued with his friend Sylvester about Marxism and Communism and the Soviet Union and he had like arguments, when he went home during holidays, with his father.

Sylvester infuriated Paul by telling him that he did not understand his own motives for being interested in Marxism or joining the YPCL's. Even when Paul was elected president of the YPCL's, a post he desired for its own sake and in the hope that it would make him more attractive to the girls who were his comrades, Paul refused to admit that his reasons for being a political radical were purely personal and sexual and artistic.

"How about you?" said Paul, irritated and triumphant. "What reason is there for your hatred of Marxism and Communism except the fact that you are a serf of the lower middle class and lack the courage to emerge from your class and place and join the brotherhood of the human race."

Sylvester told Paul that he would change his mind again and again, but Sylvester did not suspect that in twenty years' time Paul would be an ardent and self-righteous defender of Senators McCarthy and Jenner, arguing as violently about their political rightness as he argued in defense of Josef Stalin, Karl Marx, and the Soviet Union.

"You can't tell me that the one hundred fifty million people of the Soviet Union are all wrong!" Paul cried loudly to Sylvester.

"Many millions of human beings have been wrong again and again and will be wrong again and again," said Sylvester hopelessly.

"What egotism!" said Paul, "You think you're right and yet you're only one among millions and millions of human beings: a guy like you ought to want to be something more than a lackey of the lower middle-class."

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"I just want to be a human being," said Sylvester, hopelessly and hopefully, "a human being and an American: I was born in Brooklyn and thus I was fortunate enough to be born a native of the United States, an American; but what I want now is to be permitted the right implicit in the Constitution, the right to the pursuit of being a human being and not the hypnotized puppet of an economical interpretation of history and of human nature."

"Chauvinism, pure chauvinism!" said Paul, stalking off in ideological indignation.

During school holidays, Paul had arguments of a like kind with his father. Melvin Smith told his son with pride that since he was the son of a capitalist, he ought to be a capitalist himself, and join the family business as junior partner, instead of joining the traitors and revolutionists who were trying to destroy capitalism and take over the family business.

"If I were not a capitalist," said Melvin Smith, "you would not be going to an out-of-town college. You would be a shipping clerk in the garment center and a parlor socialist on Sundays and holidays. You can't have your cake and eat it too unless you want indigestion and constipation or unless you are a capitalist and can afford to buy more and more cake."

In reply, Paul denounced him as a vicious and shameless sentimentalist as well as a petty bourgeois blinded by capitalist lies.

But Paul did not remain a Communist for very long. He had become interested in music and in making music and he decided to be a great musician like Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. For a long time he had been delighted by jazz music and he had played the piano very well with a small jazz band on Saturday nights. But now he decided that he was against jazz, he detested it. Jazz was a debased expression of the anxiety and frustration of the creative, progressive, and revolutionary working-class.

His interest in studying classical music came into conflict with his political activity very soon, and he quickly decided that he was through with Communism, a shift which was made the more rapid when two factions of his party unit sought to win his favor by denouncing the other faction as in the pay of the police, an accusation entirely untrue of both factions.

"Something quite theatrical," Paul told Sylvester, "theatrical and histrionic about their behavior. It is as if they were acting out the scenario written for them by previous revolutionary movements. The police are called the Cossacks, not the cops."

At the music school where Paul now went to study harmony and counterpoint, he denounced anyone who seemed to be conscious of the trials and crises of society. He said that they really hated art and tried to deform it. And he studied very hard, amid his denunciations, and he fell in love with an extremely pretty and extremely self-conscious girl named Dorothea. Dorothea was also an ambitious musician and she responded first of all to Paul's extravagant vitality and forthrightness, even though she sometimes was shocked by his foul language. Dorothea not only admired Paul very much, but she was sure that he was a genius: she thought that she was a genius too, but said nothing about this certainty to Paul or anyone else.

In a short time, Paul and Dorothea were very much in love with each other, and when Dorothea introduced Paul to her parents, and told them she intended to marry Paul, they were horrified. Paul's preoccupation with the writing of great music was set to one side when Dorothea told him of her parents' refusal to accept Paul as her husband and their son-in-law. He recognized for the first time that Dorothea was not only very intelligent but that she was very much in love with him: hence he became even more in love with her than he had been all along, and he proposed an elopement, immediately. Despite the poverty which troubled Paul so much, since his father refused to do more than pay his tuition fee, Paul insisted that Dorothea elope with him immediately. Paul was in a hurry and Dorothea was thrilled by the idea of an elopement, and even more thrilled because her parents pro-

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hibited her marriage to a genius. She was also thrilled because Paul was in a hurry, he was always in a hurry; he kept saying that either the elopement occurred immediately or he would live a celibate's life, just as Beethoven had. After six weeks of disputation and impatience, Paul and Dorothea eloped and were married. Neither of them had any money and Paul had to take a poor job with sheet music publishers, and the newly wedded couple had to live in a seedy rooming house.

Soon enough Paul was writing arrangements for jazz bands. Soon he was leading his own jazz band. But he did not in the least surrender or forget his desire to be a great composer. He began his second symphony and Dorothea, who had voiced her suspicion that the dean of the music school was jealous of Paul, encouraged him passionately.

"I know I am right," said Dorothea. "You will prove that I am right and that you are a great composer."

And she supported her hope and admiration for her husband by drawing forth her inexhaustible fund of examples of unrecognized genius in music and in the other arts as well.

"How can it possibly be otherwise, dearest," she argued. "How can genius as original and unique as yours be clear to everyone from the very start?"

"But dearest," said Paul reasonably, "you know that you are my wife and that you love me, that's why you see me the way you do."

"I would not love you," Dorothea answered, "if you were not what you are. When you love a person you know him better than anyone else does. Think of the late quartets of Beethoven, of Cézanne, of Van Gogh, of Keats, and Emily Dickinson. No one knew how wonderful they were. And Shakespeare did not know that he was Shakespeare! If he had, he would not have let some of his best plays remain unpublished during his lifetime."

Paul was somewhat consoled by these remarks. And he found himself resorting to declarations of despair just to elicit reassurance from Dorothea, a reassurance rich in examples and praise which compared him with immortal masters.

Paul became a very successful jazz band leader and he played once a week on the radio also. He earned a very handsome salary, and he lived very well. His parents and his wife's parents were now very proud of him, bragged about his early success. Paul and Dorothea began to move among the famous and the rich, and they acquired a taste for expensive living, and they took an apartment in a fashionable neighborhood. Paul tried hard to save enough money to be able to stop conducting for a time, so that he might finish his second symphony, but this desire was contradicted and denied by their ever-increasing desire to live well and to know interesting and gifted people who were in the limelight, or the public eye, as Paul said.

Paul's success as a jazz band leader was secure. It depended upon effervescence and vitality more than upon his musicianship, but Paul strove to ignore this dependence whenever he became conscious of it. Finally, Paul secured six months of leisure, finished his second symphony, and persuaded a major orchestra to perform it.

The performance was to occur in the fall; during the summer Paul saw his friend Sylvester who was now a lawyer, none too successful, but quite content with his lot. Paul told Sylvester that he had really accomplished something new in music.

"I have augmented the world of sound in a fundamental way," he declared.

Sylvester was used to such declarations and he was pleased to hear them because he knew that it meant that his friend, of whom he was very fond, was feeling very good.

During their meetings of recent years, the friends had argued long and in vain about the possibility of being a serious composer and yet a popular one.

"Shakespeare did it," Paul insisted in a clamorous way. "If he did it, there is no reason why it can't be done today."

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Sylvester felt that the Elizabethan age was different from the present. The analogy was wrong, and the whole character of modern society seemed to him to make it very difficult for a serious musician to be popular, except by some freak or accident.

"You are a melancholy Lear, howling in the wilderness," answered Paul.

But when his symphony was performed that fall and praised politely and quickly forgotten, Paul was full of dismay. He felt that he was right back where he had started. Dorothea's reassurances were again necessary, and now they were more extreme, more exaggerated than ever.

Paul returned to conducting a jazz band at a fashionable hotel, and he played once a week on the radio. He was determined as ever to be a great composer, and he began to think of his third symphony and his fourth—perhaps if he produced the two at once, he might win the acclaim he desired so much. But he also desired and enjoyed the pleasures and comforts of his standard of living, and this desire was encouraged in him by Dorothea just as much as his ambition as a composer. Husband and wife still denied to each other and to friends that there was any real conflict between the two desires.

THE year before, Paul's sister Mildred had married a likely young man who was nothing if not willing to take Melvin Smith's place in his business. Melvin Smith retired and the business continued to prosper, just as before. Since he had nothing to do with himself, Melvin Smith began to go to all the art shows in New York City, and then he began to paint himself, and in a comparatively short period of time, he was a primitive abstractionist. He showed his canvases to various art dealers, and to Claude Vermont, the brilliant critic of modern art, who told him that his primitive abstractionism was far superior to the primitive paintings of Grandma Moses. This sufficed to secure Melvin Smith a one-man show and one of his paintings was purchased by the Museum of Primitive Modern Art.

Melvin Smith gave two of his paintings to his son and daughter-in-law, and visited them frequently without announcing his coming to be sure that they kept his paintings upon the wall of their handsome Bauhaus living room.

When Paul told his father that he did not care for primitive or abstract art, he infuriated his fond father once again.

"You have sold out," said Melvin Smith to his successful son. "You have sold out to Tin Pan Alley. Why don't you be like Bela Bartok? Money is not everything: I will be your patron, if necessary! I will support you for at least two years if you write the kind of music you really want to write instead of writing tinkle and tom-tom for Tin Pan Alley!" Melvin Smith became aware that he was shouting and he lowered his voice, "Don't you see that you will be much more satisfied with yourself, in the long run, if you stop wasting your time on pleasing the public? If you would just follow Stravinsky, Bartok, Schoenberg, and Prokofiev, you would enjoy the most important feeling in life, self-respect. You are just as good as you want to be! I knew that this was true when I was a boy and I know that it is true now."

Paul was silenced for the first time in fifteen years. He did not know what to say in reply to his father. He felt sure that the world was coming to an end, or at least the world as he had known it. He had tried to remind his father how much parental resistance there had been to his becoming a musician at all, and how much family pride there had been when he was a popular and successful composer listened to on the radio and frequently in the public eye.

But his protestation was quite in vain. And in the depths of his heart in all truth Paul himself was unable to disagree with his father or possess any strong conviction that his father was wrong and he was right.

How beautiful this success story is, how good, how true! It is the equal of any fairy tale, it is full of purity, innocence, and happiness. It is like a newborn child. It is as if one were to say, believe, and hope that America were going to be discovered again.

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THE JEWS OF RHODES

A Centuries-Old Community in Retrospect

RICHARD GALAN

THE Colossus of Rhodes was probably not very appealing as a work of art—no more than the Statue of Liberty, to compare it with a monster of the same class. Like Miss Liberty, the Colossus represented caprice on the grand scale, and, incidentally, the engineering skill and social wealth required to indulge it. When the people of Rhodes thought of raising a statue to Apollo, they decided that one about a hundred and five feet high would make a handsome gesture. Their imagination was unfettered because they had on hand the technical knowledge and the large quantity of bronze that the project called for.

Perhaps because my father was born in Rhodes, the Colossus has always had a special significance for me. By dint of staring, I have come to see in it something more than a heavy-handed compliment to a god. After all, the ancients accounted the Rhodian Apollo one of the Seven Wonders, recognizing that it shared in the outsize dignity of the Pyramids, the perverse splendor of the hanging gardens of Babylon, and the sad mania of King Mausolus, who dedicated a temple to his own dead flesh.

What use did such a little place as Rhodes have for a Colossus? The best explanation is that the Rhodians needed their monumental bronze for the same reason that New Yorkers need theirs. It served to remind them that they were a great maritime power, a forum, a mart, a school of learning and civility. Rhodes, too, was a commercial entrepôt serving a vast hinterland, and concentrating within its boundaries the better part of the wealth, power, and wisdom of the off-islanders with whom it was politically allied. Perhaps the parallel between ancient Rhodes and modern New York is partly the parallel between any pair of islands, no matter how distant from each other in time and space. The insular spirit that regards the rest of the world as off-islanders—the mild paranoia that is still perfectly able to deal with freight rates, market fluctuations, and shifting political currents—is, after all, proper to islands. Islanders are just the sort of practical dreamers to bring off gestures like colossi and skyscrapers, in which a sure knowledge and a questionable taste are heroically bodied forth.

In classical times, Rhodes was a city-state, entire of itself, coiffed with the nationalism that was the characteristic product of those walled towns. The Rhodians of those days planted colonies as freely as the Athenians, far away in Italy and Spain. Like the Athenians, again, they successfully resisted the Persian conquerors, in spite of the fact that Rhodes lies at the western extremity of the Aegean Sea, some fifteen miles from the coast of Asia Minor, which was in Persian hands. When the barbarian threat was past and Greek met Greek instead, the island was leagued against Athens, serving as headquarters for the Spartan fleet in the Peloponnesian War. And long after Greece's golden age had guttered out, Rhodes was a bastion of the Knights of St. John in Christendom's wars against Islam. It was a Turkish possession while the Ottoman Empire lasted, and an Italian colony between the world wars. Now it has been restored to Greece—*enosis* delayed some two thousand years, the time of a Diaspora.

At the end of the last century, when my

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father was born, Rhodes was the home of three races living in a state of amiable symbiosis. There was the indigenous Greek population, farmers and fishermen for the most part. There was the Turkish colony, representing the slack, mildly corrupt, and generally benevolent Ottoman administration. Lastly, there was the long-established colony of Spanish Jews; for after 1492 Spain had repaid the broad compliment of the earlier Rhodian settlers by dispatching some of its unwanted Jews to the island at the end of the Mediterranean world. That spasm of a nation purifying itself by fire, proscription, and exile sent my father's people to Rhodes, as it sent other Spanish Jews to Holland or North Africa.

Sometime after the end of the 15th century, my forefathers settled in Rhodes. They spoke a dialect that Cervantes would have recognized, just as my father finds in *Don Quixote* saws and proverbs that he heard in his boyhood from the quidnuncs of Rhodes. Some of their characteristic names, Arias, Dueñas, were among the oldest in Spain and occur in the plays of Calderón and Lope de Vega. Others, like Caballero, Córdova, Franco, are still the common coin of Spanish patronymic. But these facts would not have interested the bearers of the names among the Spanish Jews of Rhodes fifty or sixty years ago. A four-century-old tradition of bitterness discouraged any possible Hispanophile nostalgia; the exiles had hardened their hearts against the land of their origin and preferred not to speak of it, unless it were in passing and with a curse. Nevertheless, they were imprisoned in their language, even if spite drove them to write it in Hebrew rather than in Latin characters, and I doubt that they had made much headway in ridding themselves of their Spanish traits. Certainly they never lost the true Iberian contempt for the rest of mankind.

From this contempt, no other varieties of Jews were exempted. Those of Rhodes did not bother to distinguish among national origins and degrees of Orthodoxy. Litvak and Galician were impartially called "the Unclean"—a name intended to identify them as impostors, setting them apart from honest Gentiles like the Turks or the Greeks. To tell the truth, the foreign Jews who visited Rhodes were usually not at their best during their stay. They were almost all refugees from the pogroms of Polish Russia and the Ukraine, coming destitute to the island on their way to Palestine. Their claim of kinship earned them grudging succor in Rhodes; they were passed on with indecent haste to the next Sephardic community, in the hope that the Holy Land would one day swallow them up for good and all. What manner of Jews were these stooped, furtive beggars—some with red hair and blue eyes! —speaking an incomprehensible jargon familiarly, and at their prayers mocking the gracious Hebrew with their vile accent and perfunctory church Latin gabble of formulas? Not to mention that they reeked of fish, that the shaven skulls of their wives were turfed over with greasy red wigs, and that they were said to sell their daughters—and indeed it was their only wealth. Compared to these, the Mohammedan Turk was a kind of aristocrat, while the Christian Greek had the honest virtues and blunt vices that become a sea peasant. And of course neither Turk nor Greek could impeach the image that the Jews of Rhodes had of themselves, as did these poor relations fleeing from the Continent, despoiled, abject, and visibly starving.

Israel is a stiff-necked people, the Bible says, and the Jews of Rhodes did what they could to uphold the authority of Holy Writ in this particular. Grafted upon their tradition of divine election and their cankered Spanish pride was the unrealistic islander's view of his home as the navel of the world. The cargoes and currencies of so many nations passed through their hands that it was hard to avoid the illusion that the other peoples of the earth were paying a sort of tribute to the Rhodian Jews in recognition of their natural superiority. And what else might have been alien and disquieting in the echoes of far-off lives evoked by the foreign

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shipping and foreign freights, was effectively exorcized by the gift of tongues. My father's people were spontaneous polyglots. They had an unreflecting mastery over some half-dozen languages, and since they had no attachment to the cultural lares and penates that those tongues enshrined, they were virtually immune to the mysterious, incantatory elements of language which tend to make prayer out of simple utterance; for them, language was very nearly the pure medium of communication that scholars have tried to construct, the antiseptic Esperanto and Interlingua of the technician's dream.

Of course, that was not true of Spanish and Hebrew, one the mother tongue and the other the first acquired language, overheard from infancy—for the Jews of Rhodes were steady in the accomplishment of their private devotions as they were in public worship. At any rate, the first letters a child encountered were the Hebrew, in which even the Spanish-language journals were printed. Once in school, from the age of seven, a boy learned to read, write, and speak Turkish; since literary Turkish leans heavily on Persian and Arabic, these latter languages were part of the formal curriculum too. A little later in his course came modern Greek. And in my father's time a French school was founded in Rhodes, and there the likeliest students enrolled to learn still another speech and get the elements of a *lycée* education. Indeed, there were two such schools. One was run by Jesuit fathers, and it was not popular with Turks, Jews, or Greeks. Religious bias against the Catholics was the chief impediment, but almost as important was the fact that the fathers followed theories that smacked of progressive education. True to their traditional interest in pedagogical psychology, the priests insisted that the boys play outdoor games during school hours, and were even on hand to give them *bonnes notes* or *mauvaises notes* according to the quality of their performance. Such innovations scandalized Mohammedans and Jews, who held to the twelve-hour school day and recitation in chorus, like the Chinese.

The other French school was run by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, which trained young teachers in metropolitan France and sent them out to endure a thankless apostolate among their co-religionaries in the backwaters of the Mediterranean world. Universal geography, history, Latin, physics, chemistry, perspective drawing, mathematics, philosophy, French—the curriculum of the Alliance school was intended to epitomize European culture and train students in the French state of mind. I mean, of course, that enviable assurance of certain certainties that equips the Frenchman to attack and conquer any problem whatsoever to his own entire satisfaction. The one discordant strain in the symphony of liberty, equality, fraternity presented to the youth of Rhodes was the religious note: the teachers at the Alliance school were all Jews, and there were elements in their temper of Jewish nationalism and racial mysticism that swore at the firmly practical French world view. The school, moreover, was a charitable foundation, supported by Rothschild money. That philosopher-king of commerce, the Baron Edmond de Rothschild, had been stung by the backwardness of his fellow Jews of the Mediterranean, and he had dedicated money and personal enthusiasm to the work of bringing enlightenment to them.

The attitude of the beneficiaries, my father says, was a quite feudal gratitude and fealty. Once, during his own school days, news was received that the Baron himself had come to Rhodes on a tour of inspection. The intelligence arrived, in fact, while class was in session. Hastily, the masters composed a speech of welcome for the Baron's party, and my father was told to get it by heart. When the Baron was reported to be on his way to the school, the boy was to leave the class, and, after a suitable interval, burst into the room, rush up to the teachers and visiting dignitaries, and manifest a violent desire to speak. Everything went off like clockwork. At the strategic moment, he appeared from nowhere, panting realistically. He waved his hand, he

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was recognized, he bowed and addressed the visitors:

"Monsieur le Baron, Madame la Baronne, qu'il me soit permis, dans un jour si heureux pour nous, de vous souhaiter la bienvenue au nom de tous mes camarades d'école. La présence dans ce local scolaire de correligionaires si éminents fait déborder nos coeurs de joie et stimule certainement notre zèle dans la voie du progrès qui nous est tracée afin de nous rendre digne de l'intérêt paternel qu'on nous porte. Aussi, nous faisons-nous un devoir de vous prier, Monsieur le Baron, Madame la Baronne, de voulois bien agréer les voeux sincères et respectueux que nous tou formons pour votre prospérité, pour vos jours si précieux, et pour ceux de toute votre chère et noble famille."

The visitors were charmed. The French pronunciation taught at the Alliance school was more appropriate to the stage of the Comédie Française than to everyday uses—as my father was to learn—but it seemed quite suitable on this occasion. The Baron murmured a compliment, the Baroness smiled, and their daughter, a slight young woman with a serious face, asked gently, *"Jeune homme, portez-vous des phylactères?"* It was a polite way of inquiring whether the young man had reached the age of thirteen.

"Oui, Mademoiselle." For, some months earlier, my father had sat in the synagogue and had heard for the first time in his life the rabbi call him to read from the Scriptures, chanting: *"Ya-amod hashem hatov, Eliahu ben Yosef, liq'ra batorah, yishmerehu tsuro!"* That ritual summons addressed to the thirteen-year-old in the assembly of grown men had had all the dramatic effect that initiation ceremonies around the world are designed to produce; he remembered it ever after. And yet, it may be that his little set speech before the benevolent baron had even more significant consequences in shaping his life. It was a feudal utterance, and I often think that it sorted ill with the heritage of the Spaniard, the Jew, and the islander, an *aes triplex* of pride. The Spaniard is nature's democrat—not in a leveling sense, but (his manners show it) as one whose consideration for others derives from bottomless self-esteem; the Jew has chosen to be God's; the naivety of the islander lends itself to a kind of clumsy grandeur. So I often think that a seed of restlessness was planted in the boy by his part in welcoming the Rothschilds to Rhodes. At sixteen, he was the commercial correspondent for the local bank, writing in English, French, Italian, Turkish, and Arabic about letters of credit, rates of exchange, bottomry bonds. The post carried with it a modicum of glory and about the highest salary a man could earn in the island then, four louis d'or a month, but he was restless. At seventeen, he paid a visit to Smyrna, where a French newspaper was published, and where one could drink Pilsener on the quays. Compared with Rhodes, the mainland port was alive with intellectual stimulus, but my father rightly divined that it was no Paris, even if the cafés did subscribe to *Le Temps, Le Matin, Le Figaro, Le Journal des débats,* and *Les Annales politiques et littéraires.* The next year he went to Paris—and stayed just long enough to send home for money to take him across the ocean. New York detained him three weeks, and then he traveled by rail to Seattle. Presumably, there was no ship in Seattle harbor on the point of sailing for Sydney or Yokohama, for he went no farther. Instead, he rattled around the country like a pea in a bladder, until the energy generated in him by his sense of the disproportion between ideal and actuality had expended itself and could drive him no more. Now, nearly half a century later, he is still a vigorous man, but I can scarcely think of him without nostalgia for the type he represents—stiff-backed, staring men, intensely practical and incurably idealistic, courteous and quick to take offense, grave and choleric with a Latin and Semitic sense of self. In Rhodes the race is now extinct, for during the Second World War the Italians transported men, women, and children—some thousands of them—to Greece, and from there, under a guard of German soldiers, to Auschwitz.

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CEDARS OF LEBANON

"A FAITH THAT IS WHOLE"

Testament of a Jewish Intellectual

MENAHEM BORAISHA

WHEN Menahem Boraisha died in 1949, he had finally achieved the artistic statement of "a faith that is whole" for which he struggled his entire life. His *Der Geyer,* an epic poem published in two volumes in 1933, describing the spiritual and physical journeys of an itinerant Jewish penitent during the 19th century, had gained him both critical and popular renown. He had, in his forty-fifth year, in the phrase of his early master, I. L. Peretz, grown strong wings and flown high.

The account that follows, from Boraisha's volume *A Dor* ("A Generation"), published in 1947, is important both for its honest insight into his own limitations as poet, and for the light it sheds upon his milieu and the problems of his generation. Boraisha was certainly not alone in sensing the dilemma of a period between faiths—he was preceded and followed by Jewish authors describing the same dilemma in Hebrew and Yiddish, and, latterly, in the European languages as well. As he notes, the Jewish intellectuals and artists of the 19th century came to the Emancipation later than the rest of Europe, and Jewish religion had been a stronger force over a longer period—hence, the peculiarly violent reaction of Jews to the Enlightenment. Hence, too, the persistence of the problem of faith for modern Jews as a social phenomenon, not only a personal one. Judaism, as Boraisha puts it, is an imperative heritage from our forefathers; taken on its own terms, it has to be either accepted or rejected. Read from this vantage, as a self-conscious literary rebel's statement of a common, almost mass feeling, Boraisha's testament assumes new dimensions. The translation from the Yiddish is mine.—JACOB SLOAN

THE eight years I studied under Peretz, he derived—I think—more sorrow than joy from my work. He was a patient master with a vast fund of warmth. At times we actually fell in love with one another—then would come a reaction, and he would deliberately turn away and ignore me, as though to punish both of us. But the separation hurt him, and he could never hold out for long. . . . Still, it came hard for him, drumming the laws of literature into my head. In the beginning he used to rework my poems himself. I literally held my head reading his "revisions." Then he stopped. I was supposed to "improve" myself. But I kept coming back to him with material he just couldn't digest. Once it was a long prose poem about death, full of abstractions and pathos. Peretz heard me out patiently—after his manner. Then he took me to a wall where a group of Leviton's landscapes hung. He stopped before one of them, a painting of naked trees, a cold pond, and a hut surrounded by a fence. Peretz said, "You see—this is death, and life, and everything."

I understood exactly what he meant. But I couldn't go along with Peretz. I continued to follow my own bent.

Peretz had a much easier time with the other writers, who took the high road. He never knew where he stood with me. Once he said in a public survey of the young writers: "Menahem will either grow strong wings and fly high, or nothing will come of him." And he kept urging me: "Study! Study! Others may not need it. But you do! You've got to study a lot." . . .

Reviewing those forty years, I can see that mine was a tremendous generation. The peo-

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ple I sat down to table with—from Mendele Mocher Seforim, Isaac Leib Peretz, Sholom Aleichem, Chaim Rachman Bialik, to the merest tyro—what a wonderful blossoming of talent! But between me and them stood barriers. The barriers were inside me; at first I couldn't, and afterward I didn't want to break them down.

I came on the scene at a time when many of my generation were freshly drunk with the revolution that Europe had experienced generations before: the liberation of man—that is, man's liberation from the yoke of the Divine. In Spinoza's pantheism man was still inextricably joined to the Divinity. By the time of Kant, man had advanced to the center of the stage, and God was a kind of symbol for ethical perfection. To Auguste Comte man sat on the Divine throne. Man was the beginning and man was the end. In art the liberation from theology began during the Renaissance. By the time the state finally separated from the church, art had long been free of that bondage. This was true of Christianity in Europe. But even under the harshest dictatorship of the church, man was able to "live as himself" far more freely in Christian Europe than he ever could under our Jewish regime of a "whole faith." So the revolution went much deeper with us.

In terms of society, my generation was able to tie itself to new faiths, social and national, to which they carried over their forefathers' devotion, their total immersion, and their intolerance. But this immersion in new faiths was followed by a powerful stream of individualistic liberation, the construction of a new cult, the cult of man, of the self, of the unfettered personality. This cult was the basis for the new literature of our day. For the first time since the Bible and Aggada, Jewish writing concerned itself with the individual, his experiences, visions, longings. This was in narrative literature. In poetry, particularly the lyric, the cult of the self opened two doors that had always been closed to the pious, unassuming Jew before: doors leading to nakedness and to egocentricity. If the world can best be seen through the self, and the self is the center of all things, then inevitably everything that takes place in the self is raised to the stature of a cosmic event, and he who possesses the power to sing of these events becomes creation's elect and may kneel at his own feet.

This leap to the self, the act of placing oneself at the center of creation, was one I could not make. My feeling for my forefathers made me shiver at the thought that people could turn themselves into mirrors in which to regard the heavens and the earth. I was ashamed of the nakedness and revolted at the egocentricity. That does not mean that I did not share my generation's drive to write poems about self. I used to think out such poems, but not write them down. Or else I used the device of writing self-poetry disguised as folk literature. It was not until years later that I conceived the idea of adopting pseudonyms and writing lyric poetry under the names of Zavel Rimer and Noach Markom. The little I published under my own name involved me in psychological traumas: it came as hard as crossing the Red Sea.

The critic Baal Machashovos said I was sick. What was I sick from? Looking at my generation from the distance of forty years, I can see it now: most of them left God with a light heart and achieved their personal salvation. To me the departure was like a sharp break, and I never got over it. Never! In the poetry of my generation, the word "God" became a metaphor. Never to me. I never lost my awe of God. I longed to place myself back in a system of faith that was whole, integrated, and though the center of such a system was gone, I never lost the sense of "place," where the center ought to be. The center absent, all the impulses and themes flowing from the surface of the self were bound to the here and now. You might as well write popular librettos, if that was all. I was driven to search for that which lies above and beyond the here and now, and I preferred the foolish attempt to scale a blank wall, preferred to fall and be injured time and again—rather than to take the "safe and sound" king's highway. In a loyal master like Peretz this called forth doubt and sorrow. In others—derogation and mockery. But I had no choice. Scaling blank walls was in me, it was my imperative heritage from forefathers who demanded I achieve a faith that was whole.

[*A second selection from this essay will follow.*]

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THE STUDY OF MAN

BIBLE AND BABEL

A Comparative Study of the Hebrew and Babylonian Religious Spirit

JACOB J. FINKELSTEIN

ONE of the most absorbing aspects of the study of the civilizations of the ancient Near East, and especially of Mesopotamia, since the decipherment of cuneiform writing about a century ago, has been the continuous illumination it has thrown on the history, society, and religion of ancient Israel. These civilizations have, of course, a fascination in their own right, and the Assyriologists of today are not primarily concerned with the impact and implications of their work on the understanding of the Old Testament. But to the Western mind the Near East still represents the "Bible Lands" despite the current turmoil in the area occasioned by other interests; Egypt is still the land where the Israelites were in bondage, the land whence they emerged under Moses as a nation dedicated to a new religious idea, and Mesopotamia is traditionally the land of Abraham's birth, the land with which, by the testimony of the Bible itself, the Israelites continued to have important political and cultural contact throughout their history.

For the religiously oriented Westerner, Christian and Jew alike, it is naturally that part of the Babylonian record which has a direct bearing on the religious thought and literature of the Bible that attracts his most serious attention. Most of the West is committed in some degree to the belief that the monotheism of the Old Testament represents the highest level of theological perception yet attained by man, and that the religion of ancient Israel—or at least the religious thought of the prophetic age—embodies the most exalted spiritual conceptions ever attained by any ancient nation. When Babylonian religious and literary works were discovered, showing unmistakable relations with Biblical counterparts, such as the Creation and Flood stories in Genesis, it was therefore inevitable that they should be very carefully scrutinized for the contrasts as well as for the parallels they displayed with the Biblical versions. Given the cultural background of the investigating scholars—many of them had in fact had a theological training and were committed to accepting the Biblical word as divine inspiration—it was also inevitable that they would find the Biblical stories superior in religious, ethical, and other qualities to their Babylonian counterparts. It may even be charged that this conclusion was a prior assumption, and that the investigation was undertaken with the implicit purpose of demonstrating the truth of this assumption.

On the surface the Biblical versions of these stories do seem to exhibit a greater awareness of ethical values while lacking all the mythology of the Babylonian versions. Such considerations, when viewed against the larger background of the Babylonian religious system with its thoroughgoing polytheism, magic, astrology, and related religious institutions, served only to confirm Biblical scholars and theologians late in the 19th century in their conviction that the monotheism of Israel was the superior

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theological concept, in that it provided the basis for an ethical rule of life unavailable to the polytheistic system of the Babylonians. In their zeal to uphold the superiority of the religion of the Old Testament these scholars ignored a body of substantial evidence which might have cast a more favorable light on Babylonian religious thought. Numerous Babylonian religious texts such as hymns and prayers had already been published which reflected a high moral and ethical consciousness and a deep awareness of sin and retribution. There were indeed many Babylonian compositions that for moral and spiritual elevation could hold their own with some of the noblest passages in the Bible. The conclusions of these scholars, in brief, accorded scant justice to the Babylonian record, and little, as we shall see, to the Biblical one.

It was therefore not surprising when the leading Assyriologist at the turn of the century, Professor Friedrich Delitzsch of the University of Berlin, in a series of three public lectures beginning in 1902, entitled "Babel and Bible," undertook to champion Babylonian religion and culture against the Biblical scholars and theologians.* Although the declared purpose of the lectures was to synthesize the results of Mesopotamian archaeology and Assyriological study for the general public, the theme turned out to be nothing less than an all-out defense of the spiritual, ethical, and moral qualities of Babylonian culture and religion despite its obvious polytheism. It was at the same time an almost unrestrained attack on the claims made for the superiority of the religion of the Old Testament in these very same qualities.

Delitzsch epitomized his belief in the overall ethical superiority of Babylonian to Israelite civilization, apart from its obvious chronological priority, by giving Babel (Babylon) deliberate precedence over Bible in the title of his lectures. He compared the very same stories, including the Creation and Flood tales, which the Biblical scholars had appealed to in support of their claim for the ethical superiority of the Bible, and purported to show that the Babylonian versions were superior in this respect. He went so far as to deprive the Israelites of the glory of having conceived of that unrivaled boon to Western living, the Sabbath, claiming instead that "there can therefore be scarcely the shadow of a doubt that in the last resort we are indebted to this ancient nation on the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris for the plenitude of blessings that flows from our day of Sabbath or Sunday rest." He even cast doubt upon the ultimate glory of Israelite religion by producing alleged evidence that the worship of Yahweh as the sole god was already known to "Canaanite" tribes who migrated to Mesopotamia before 2000 B.C.E. He also cited other texts which seemed to indicate that the Babylonians ultimately developed a monotheism centered on the god Marduk, the patron deity of the city of Babylon. Israelite religion was thus shorn of virtually all credit for the major contributions to religious and ethical thought which Judaism and Christianity had claimed for it.

Even a cursory reading of Delitzsch's lectures will reveal that, together with a deep passion for his subject and a justifiable resentment against the high-handed manner with which Biblical scholars often used it, he harbored a deep antipathy to the religion of the Old Testament. This last failing led him into errors of overstatement, and even ignoring such parts of the records on both sides as were prejudicial to his thesis. These were, to be sure, common scholarly weaknesses to which the Biblical scholars had themselves succumbed. Such weaknesses, however, might escape notice in the work of defenders of the Bible, but they were likely to stand out when displayed by someone on the other side. Delitzsch himself provided his opponents with the main weapons for their attack which followed on the heels of his very first lecture.

The authorities of the Lutheran Church, and conservative theologians and Biblical scholars of most Christian denominations, voiced violent objection to the thesis of the lectures on purely doctrinal grounds. They rightly regarded it as a direct assault on the fundamental Christian doctrine of the divine election of Israel, and thus, by implication, on Christian teaching about the ministry of Jesus. Delitzsch freely admitted that he did not himself hold these beliefs, and in a private interview with the Kaiser he admitted further that he did not believe in the divinity of Jesus, nor that any passage in the Old Testament foretold his coming. Wilhelm II thereupon issued a lengthy statement dissociating himself and the German Lutheran Church (of which he was the nom-

*The English translation of these lectures was published in this country in 1906 by the Open Court Publishing Co. in Chicago.

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inal head) from Delitzsch's views, pronouncing them a menace to public faith and morality. To quote the famous theologian Harnack in approval of the Kaiser's decision, it became "the talk of the streets that 'the Old Testament no longer amounts to much!' " Royal sponsorship was withdrawn from the last lecture, and the public was exhorted not to take on faith any of Delitzsch's opinions as they affected the orthodox view of the Old Testament.

Such attacks from organized and conservative Christian quarters were to be expected, but scholars and liberal theologians equally failed to come to grips with the essence of Delitzsch's thesis. They contented themselves with pointing out Delitzsch's excesses and even his misrepresentations; none was apparently moved to reconsider the entire basis of the common belief in the superiority of Israelite theology and ethics in the light of the cogent evidence which Delitzsch adduced to show that the Babylonians, despite their polytheism, similarly reached high levels of ethical and spiritual thought.

The scholars were thus easily able to expose the baselessness of Delitzsch's claim for the Babylonian origin of the Sabbath. The basic facts are as follows: the seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days of every month were known as "evil days" to the Babylonians, and of these days the nineteenth (which Delitzsch ignored for the obvious reason that it did not fit into the Sabbath pattern) was considered the most baneful. These days were considered dangerous for many kinds of activities, and for some of them lamentation was prescribed. The Babylonian term *shapattu*—possibly connected etymologically with Hebrew *shabbat* (Sabbath)—was never applied to these days as Delitzsch claimed, but only to the fifteenth day of each month, which was never counted as one of the "dangerous" days. The term *shapattu* did have a connotation of "ending" or "termination," but this did not refer to any ceasing of work, but to the ending of the first half of the month, or the time of the full moon. Although it is still possible that the Hebrew term for Sabbath is derived ultimately from the Babylonian term, the character of the days to which the Israelites applied it bears only the remotest relation to comparable Babylonian days.

Delitzsch's alleged evidence for the worship of Yahweh among certain "Canaanites" dwelling in Mesopotamia is more readily disposed of. It was not easily refuted at the turn of the century because of the imprecise knowledge of dialectal Akkadian grammar current in Delitzsch's day. The word which had been interpreted as referring to Yahweh we now know to be nothing more than the first person possessive pronoun. At all events, it is now commonly recognized that the name Yahweh is excluded in all the cited occurrences. We shall refer later to the texts which allegedly indicate a tendency toward monotheism on the part of the Babylonians.

II

MANY other details of evidence cited by Delitzsch in support of his thesis were refuted in his day, and even more can be discounted in light of our present knowledge. But the crux of Delitzsch's thesis raised a dilemma which his critics virtually ignored. If it is true that many Babylonian religious texts—not to mention the implications of the great collection of the laws of Hammurabi discovered at the very time that Delitzsch's lectures were in progress—reflected a deep consciousness of ethical and moral principles, wherein then lay the reputed superiority of the monotheistic system of Israel to the polytheistic system of Babylonia? Could we not speak as appropriately of "ethical polytheism" as we are wont to speak of "ethical monotheism"? It certainly cannot be argued that monotheism per se represents a higher understanding of cosmological truth than polytheism does, especially if both conceptions are predicated on an ethical and moral order of the universe. The Chinese, after all, seem to have arrived at a moral and ethical conception of the universe without a theistic system at all.

But if the Biblical scholars did not actually come to grips with this problem, they revealed an awareness of it. The superiority of the religion of Israel, they claimed, is manifested by the greater concern with ethical and moral considerations in the Biblical record than in comparable Babylonian compositions. In other words, they grudgingly admitted the existence of ethical and moral motivation in Babylonian thinking, but claimed what might be described as a *quantitative* superiority for the ethical thought of the Old Testament. But this was precisely the level on which Delitzsch chose to fight. The debate was reduced to a sort of ethics contest, in which each side sought to prove the higher ethical content of its favorite.

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It might be instructive to follow the lines of the debate as it centered around the Babylonian and Biblical Flood stories, whose interrelation is acknowledged on all sides, with the chronological priority of the Mesopotamian account being similarly unchallengeable.

There are, in point of fact, various Mesopotamian versions of the Flood episode, in the early Sumerian language as well as in the Semitic dialect of Akkadian, and there appears to be some organic connection among all of them. The best-known version is the latest and the most completely preserved one, the story of the Flood comprising the entire eleventh tablet of the most famous Babylonian literary work, the Epic of Gilgamesh. It is set in the form of a recounting by Utanapishtim—the Babylonian counterpart of Noah—of the circumstances of the great Flood, the means of his escape and the subsequent unique gift of immortality which the great god Enlil had bestowed upon him. The story is told to Gilgamesh who had finally sought out Utanapishtim at the end of a long series of journeys in search of the secret of immortality. By means of the recitation Utanapishtim seeks to convince his listener that this boon was granted only once to a mortal under unique circumstances and can never again be achieved by a mortal being. Here are the essential features of the episode as set out in this version:*

The great gods were prompted to produce a flood. The god Ea, lord of wisdom and the god most favorably disposed toward mankind, secretly warns Utanapishtim of the gods' plans and advises him to tear down his house and build a ship, to "Give up possessions, seek life; Despise property and keep the soul alive."

He is to take aboard the boat "the seed of all living things." The god also gives him the design of the boat, which is apparently to be in the form of an exact cube. When Utanapishtim wonders what to tell his fellow citizens when they see him at work on his strange project, Ea advises him to explain that he has to leave the city because Enlil, the chief of the gods, has taken a dislike to him, and that he is therefore going to live with Ea in the Apsu (the subterranean waters in Mesopotamian cosmology, which are the domain of Ea); a reply which was technically true, but purposely deceitful, for Enlil's dislike was of course directed against all of mankind. This deceit is underscored by the double meaning of the words of reassurance which Ea tells Utanapishtim to relay to his fellow citizens. He is to tell them that the gods will send down upon them a "rain of wheat"; but the word for wheat in Akkadian may also be understood as "woe." The context clearly indicates that the populace is expected to construe the message as a favorable one while Utanapishtim understands its true meaning. This subterfuge is apparently dictated by the desire to avoid having Utanapishtim tell an outright lie, especially on the advice of a god. The deceit clearly worked, the populace was touched by his explanation, and all apparently pitched in to help him get his ark ready by contributing equipment and supplies and aiding in the construction. He then loaded aboard all possessions, family, relatives, "the seed of all living things" and—in a characteristic Mesopotamian touch—a representative of each known craft.

The description of the ensuing storm is presented in mythological terms. Adad, the god of storm and rain, sends the flood-storm, preceded by twin destructive deities representing perhaps atmospheric disturbances such as the tornado; the major underworld god Nergal opens the dam on the subterranean waters; the war and irrigation god Ninurta breaches the dikes. The constant flash of lightning is described as the action of the host of earthly gods who "raised their torches to the sky, lighting up the land with their brightness." But the fierceness of the storm was such that even the gods became terrified, and they fled to the safety of the old sky-god Anu where they huddled crouching in fear "like dogs" beneath a wall. From this safe vantage point they observed the flood waters filled with the corpses of man and beast and were overcome with remorse for having consented to such destruction. Ishtar, the great mother goddess, gave loud voice to this grief with the words:

"How could I have ordered evil in the divine assembly,
Have ordered war to destroy my people,
When it is I myself who give birth to my people!"

All the gods—with the apparent exception of Enlil, the chief of the pantheon—thereupon

*The most felicitous English rendering of the entire epic is by E. A. Speiser in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, 1954). It forms the basis of the translations here.

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plunge into mourning. After raging for seven days, the flood subsided. In the words of Utanapishtim:

"I then opened a vent [or: *hatch*] *and light struck my face.*
I looked about the sea; all was silence,
And all mankind had returned to clay.
The landscape was level as a flat roof.
I bent low and sat down weeping,
Tears running down my face.
I looked about in all directions for the ends of the sea;
At a distance of twelve [*double hours*] *a mountain range emerged.*
At Mount Nisir the ship came to a halt."

On the seventh day after this landing:

"I sent forth the dove, setting her free.
The dove went forth and returned;
No resting-place appeared for her, so she returned.
I sent forth the swallow, setting her free.
No resting-place appeared for her, so she returned.
I then sent forth the raven, setting it free.
The raven went forth and saw the subsidence of the waters.
It eats, circles, caws, and does not return.
I let everything free to the four winds, and offered a sacrifice.
I poured out a libation on the top of the mountain.
Seven and seven vessels I set out.
Beneath them I heaped up cane, cedar, and myrtle.
The gods smelled the savor,
The gods smelled the sweet savor;
The gods gathered like flies around the sacrificer."

The goddess Ishtar arrives at the scene, vowing that she will never forget the Deluge, and attempts to prevent Enlil from sharing in the sacrifice, as it was he who brought on the Deluge "without reflection." When Enlil arrives, he sees the ship, and, realizing that some mortals had escaped destruction, he turns in anger on the rest of the gods. They then reveal to him that it was Ea who was responsible. Ea then addresses Enlil most eloquently:

"O Valiant one, thou art the wisest of the gods.
How couldst thou without reflection bring on the Deluge?
On the sinner impose his sin; on the transgressor impose his transgression.
But be lenient lest he be cut off; be patient lest he [*perish*]*."*

Ea continues by telling Enlil that (if it was his intention to punish mankind) instead of the Deluge he could have smitten mankind with attacks of wild beasts, famine, or pestilence, which would have served to "diminish" mankind, but not destroy it completely. Enlil is apparently overcome by this speech, and as a form of atonement blesses Utanapishtim, granting him and his wife the unprecedented gift of immortal life.

III

THE parallels between this story and the Biblical Flood episode are fairly obvious. God decides to send down the Deluge because mankind has become evil and has corrupted the entire earth. Noah is to be spared because he is the only righteous person on earth. The dimensions of the ark which God commands Noah to build differ from those in the Babylonian account, but they are described in detail by God himself. He is to take aboard a male and female of each living species. In both versions the Deluge is the result of heavy rains and the simultaneous rising of subterranean waters. The traditional resting place of Noah's Ark, Mount Ararat in Armenia, is a notable variation from the Mount Nisir of the Babylonian story, which is in Southern Kurdistan. The most striking resemblances between the two stories occur at the end of the Flood, when Noah opens the window of the Ark, and sends forth the dove three times before it stays away for good; the Biblical text at this point parallels the Babylonian almost word for word. Noah, like Utanapishtim, then offers sacrifices, and in a striking parallel to the Babylonian text we read: "God smelled the sweet savor" (Genesis 8:21), which prompts his decision never again to unleash such total destruction against the earth, "for the schemes of man's heart are evil from his youth, and I shall never again destroy all living things as I have done."

The dependence of the Biblical story upon the Babylonian to some degree is granted by virtually all schools of thought. There can be no question about priority in time; the essential details of the Mesopotamian flood story were already current by at least 2000 B.C.E. In evaluating the two versions, the Babylonian story is generally conceded the prize for

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its ingenuous human charm, which is enhanced by its being couched in poetic form. On the other hand, it has invariably come off a bad second in the test for moral and ethical content. John Skinner, for example, in his commentary on Genesis (1910) states: "The ethical motive, which is but feebly developed in the Babylonian account, obtains clear recognition in the hands of the Hebrew writers; the Flood is a divine judgment on human corruption; etc." There follows the expected invidious comparison between the "vindictive, capricious" and deceitful gods of the Babylonians and the one "almighty and righteous God—a Being capable of anger and pity, and even change of purpose, but holy and just in His dealings with men." A similar verdict, but in even more severe terms, is pronounced by the modern Assyriologist A. Heidel, in his book *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (1949). He even quotes with approval an earlier contemptuous opinion of the Babylonian Flood story as "steeped in the silliest polytheism." It was just this kind of refusal to appreciate the merits of Babylonian religious thought and literature on their own terms by Biblical scholars that contributed to the violence of Delitzsch's reaction.

Granting for the moment the assumption made by virtually all Western theologians—which, say, an educated Chinese or Indian might conceivably not find so axiomatic—that monotheism is inherently a more advanced, elevated, and ethically superior form of religious conception than polytheism, what logical process dictates the further inference that the religious literature of a polytheistic society must of necessity be baser, cruder, or less moral in outlook than the literature of a monotheistic society? There is no doubt that the entire literature of the Old Testament, regardless of the age, character, or original function of its component elements, is made to conform with its over-all theme: the one God and his purposes, especially as they apply to man. But is it necessary to expect that the vision of ethical monotheism will transform every Biblical episode in equal degree or be reflected in it? This is precisely what Biblical scholarship implied by its uniform finding in favor of the Biblical material whenever confronted with Mesopotamian parallels. It is doubtful, however, that an impartial observer would easily discern the higher ethical motivation inherent in the Biblical Flood episode, for example, as opposed to the Babylonian account. It is often pointed out in this connection that in the Babylonian story the gods decide to send down the Deluge without any apparent motivation, while in the Biblical story the Flood is unleashed explicitly as a punishment for man's wicked behavior. The speech of Ea, however, after the Flood is over, is an indication that, to the mind of the Babylonians, the decision was in the first place prompted by man's evil behavior. The reason for its not being stated explicitly is not necessarily due to the weak conception on the part of the Babylonian thinkers of the gods' concern for ethical conduct, to which it is often attributed. It must be remembered that the Babylonian story is presented as a recital by Utanapishtim of the significant events for the purpose of convincing Gilgamesh that his quest for immortality is vain; that his own immortal status was due to the unique circumstances of that ancient event, which can never again be repeated. It was not germane to this purpose to emphasize the causes of the Flood, nor would it have been appropriate for Utanapishtim himself to pass judgment on the alleged depravity of the whole race of his fellow men. The Biblical narrative, on the other hand, is impersonal and its purpose is precisely to set forth God's actions and motives.

THERE exists, however, a much older version of the Babylonian Flood story than the one incorporated in the Gilgamesh Epic. Here the episode is part of a long impersonal narrative which was conceived as nothing less than a kind of history of mankind. This version of the Flood story is not often quoted in comparisons with the Biblical story—although in numerous details it appears to be closer to the Biblical version than the account in Gilgamesh—due to the fact that the text is still very fragmentary. But the vital point for us is that in this version the cause of the Flood is explicitly given:

The land became wide, the people became numerous.
The land hummed like a lyre [or: *bellowed like wild oxen*].*

*The ambiguity of the original Akkadian phrase presents this rather strangely contrasting pair of alternative renderings, but the sense of the simile is clear; humanity was setting up a constant din.

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The god was depressed by their uproar,
Enlil heard their clamour
And said to the great gods:

"The clamour of mankind has become oppressive,
Because of their uproar I want sleep."

There can be little doubt that the noise of mankind which disturbs Enlil's repose is only the metaphoric or mythological guise for what is clearly meant to be the wicked behavior of man. Biblical scholars will not be in a position to dispute such an interpretation, for these are precisely the terms in which the sinfulness of those most wicked of cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, is described in Genesis 18:20f. and 19:13. It is the noise and clamor of these cities which, having reached an intolerable pitch, impel God to send down a rain of "brimstone and fire." If the Biblical "noise and clamor" can be interpreted as metaphor the same consideration may be granted to the Babylonian use of the same terms. It is true that in the Biblical Flood story it is made explicit that Noah is to be spared because he was a "righteous man" while the rest of his generation was corrupt. Again it must be noted that we cannot fairly expect Utanapishtim to say this of himself in his narration to Gilgamesh. In the older text (usually referred to as the Atrahasis Epic, for this is the name of the Babylonian "Noah" in that version of the Flood episode) the section where such a statement might have been expected is missing. There is clear evidence, which we shall soon discuss, that Atrahasis is, in fact, thought to be righteous.

Returning to the reasons for the Deluge, neither the Biblical version nor the Babylonian goes beyond generalizations in describing the alleged wickedness of man. From the Biblical text alone it would appear that the behavior of mankind was no worse before the Flood than after it. It is only that later God becomes reconciled to the fundamentally evil "devisings of man's heart" (Genesis 8:21) and decides never again to resort to such extreme forms of punishment for it. Later Jewish rabbis, obviously not satisfied with this kind of motivation for the Flood, had recourse to midrash in order to supply appropriate grounds for such an extreme measure. They speculated on the nature of the wickedness, and imagined that it must have included various forms of sexual depravity, widespread homicide and robbery, or even all three. The ancient rabbis, as well as some modern scholars, were apparently also troubled by the lack of any indication in the Biblical text that God had given mankind any warning of their impending doom, so as to allow them a chance for repentance.

Another disturbing feature was the apparently callous indifference of Noah to the doom of his fellow men. The proper task of a really righteous man (a *tzaddik*) would have been to warn them of the coming catastrophe and to exhort them to repentance. The rabbis proceeded to fill both these deficiencies by means of midrash. Thus God's decision to reduce the normal human life-span from the high hundreds of the pre-diluvian generations to one hundred and twenty—plainly an etiological tale meant to explain the still proverbial "one hundred and twenty years"—is interpreted by the rabbis as the period of grace during which mankind was given an opportunity to repent and reform its ways. Noah (together with Methuselah) exhorted his fellow men to repentance during this period, warning them of the divine punishment for their wickedness. In the same vein, the rabbis visualized the situation of Noah vis-à-vis his contemporaries when he began building his large and strange craft on dry land—a situation which, as we have seen, presented itself also to the mind of the Babylonian writer—and they appropriately imagined Noah telling them the plain truth: God had decided to destroy all earthly life by means of a flood. The response of the populace, as imagined by the rabbis, was, as to be expected, derisive laughter. Now there is of course not the slightest warrant in the Biblical text for any of these interpretations. Heidel, nevertheless, chooses to accept the midrashic period of grace as the literal meaning of the life-span episode together with the conception of Noah as preaching to his fellow men during this period. The moral justification for the Flood in the Biblical text was evidently just as deficient to the sensibilities of modern scholars as it was to the ancient Jewish rabbis.

But if midrashic fancy may be exploited as a means of bolstering the moral basis of the Biblical Flood story, how much more justified is Delitzsch who, in championing the Babylonian version, points to the weeping of Utanapishtim when he beheld the aftermath of the Flood, a touch of human compassion absent in the Biblical account. And on these grounds the case for Babylonia is even stronger

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than Delitzsch himself realized. For in the fragmentary late Assyrian revision of the Atrahasis Epic, in which the final Deluge is only the culmination of a series of lesser punishments, we find Atrahasis interceding with the gods in behalf of his fellow men in the two instances which are still preserved, a feature which is strongly reminiscent of Abraham's intercession with God on behalf of the people of Sodom. In other words, where the Biblical story characterizes Noah as a *tzaddik*, but fails to illustrate it by deed, the Babylonian Flood tradition proves its hero's righteousness much more convincingly precisely by describing his deeds; what had to be supplied for the Biblical account by rabbinic imagination is explicit in the Babylonian accounts.

The foregoing exposition is not, of course, designed as a defense of Delitzsch's thesis. It is meant rather to illustrate the hazardousness of attempting to prove the superiority of Israelite religion and ethics to the Babylonian on the basis of what are essentially trivial details. Parallel traditions, such as the treatment of the Flood legend in Babylonia and Israel, can be profitably compared only in the light of a full appreciation of the cultural and religious contexts of the respective civilizations. Such understanding is particularly vital when it is clear—as it is in our case—that the theme itself was an object of cultural borrowing. For it is obvious that the cultural context will determine to a great degree the treatment of the theme under observation. In civilizations with such greatly dissimilar religious orientations as Babylonia and Israel, the emphases and treatment of a common theme are bound to differ sharply. But once such differences are taken into account, value judgments based on comparisons will appear all the more meaningless.

IV

Now monotheism and polytheism—the most fundamental of the contrasts between Babylonian and Israelite theology—bear within themselves a series of cosmological implications which will channel the religious and philosophical responses of the followers of each approach along certain limited and inevitable lines. We cannot, of course, enter here into a lengthy discussion of all these implications, but we shall have to review, however sketchily, those that are basic to our present theme.

What is the essence of polytheism as a theological system? It implies the existence of a plurality of superhuman wills. This very condition precludes the absolute omnipotence of any one of these wills. Even if in the mind of a worshiper one or another of these wills, or deities, is thought to be the head of the pantheon, he must at all times be mindful of the purposes of the other deities which are potentially vitiating to his own designs. As in the case of Ea upsetting Enlil's plan for the destruction of all life by forewarning Utanapishtim of the coming Flood, even the chief deity may sometimes be tricked or deceived. The free expression of the will and personality of any one god is thus under constant threat of a clash with the will and personality of another god. In other words, the gods in a polytheistic system, though operating in an exclusive sphere, face much the same stresses and strains in their efforts at self-realization as man does on earth.

This has the further corollary that the gods cannot *consistently* act in accordance with a humanly conceived moral or ethical ideal. If the first thought of the gods, as that of man, must be "to look out for himself" vis-à-vis his fellow gods, moral and ethical considerations necessarily become secondary. From the point of view of mankind, therefore, the actions of the gods, especially as they affect man, may take on the appearance of caprice or wilfulness. But this does not mean, as has sometimes been stated, that gods act purposefully and wantonly to the detriment of man. On the contrary, to the mind of the Mesopotamian the gods stand in great need of and actually are dependent on the service of man. It is only that in the last resort the needs and welfare of man are of secondary importance in the gods' considerations; it may well happen that a course of action decided upon by the gods for good and sufficient reason to themselves may at the same time be catastrophic for man without his having done anything to incur such treatment. The people, such as the Babylonians, always viewed such misfortune as evidence of the gods' wrath and their own guilt. The profound sense of sin and retribution of the Babylonians is amply attested by their penitential prayers, which give moving expression to this feeling. But the crucial point is not that they possessed an awareness of sin, but that they had no assurance or hope that right conduct would insure their well-being. Sin and misconduct were sure to arouse the

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gods' anger, but there was no formula that could guarantee divine favor. No god was in a position to offer such assurance; he might at any time be compelled, for private reasons, to ignore such an agreement. For this reason even the concept of such an agreement is completely foreign to a polytheistic system. The gods, for their part, appreciated and even demanded moral and ethical conduct on the part of mankind, but they could offer no guarantees in return. Thus the Babylonian gods are often termed by modern writers (but rarely if ever by the Babylonians themselves) capricious, crafty, and treacherous. They are, to be sure, (for the most part) immortal, but in their needs, desires, and motivations, endowed with all of man's spiritual frailties; they are, in a word, only supermen. Mythology, which, in classical usage, involves the treatment of divine figures in human terms, is an inherent feature of any polytheistic system.

A monotheistic religion by virtue of its inherent characteristics tends, on the other hand, to become an ethical religion. There is no other being who is of the same essence as the single god; the possibility of a *real* rival is beyond conception. The will of this god is therefore incontestable. Though this god must always be conceived of in essentially human terms, man is conscious that this deity is in no way limited by any external forces which could restrict the full expression of his own personality; he has no peers to contend with, no rival wills to counteract. This feature alone renders him as fundamentally different from the gods of a polytheistic system, as from the condition of humanity itself. This god may then be conceived of as being motivated in his decisions by the highest ideals and never by the baser or selfish impulses which inhibit the realization of these ideals by man and polytheistic deities alike. He is therefore completely free to give his complete and unselfish attention to all that goes on in the universe.

By the same token he is in a position to lay down a mandate for man's behavior on earth in accordance with these ideals, and to guarantee man's well-being if his will is complied with, an advantage which, as we have seen, no polytheistic god could possibly enjoy. Man alone is capable of disregarding the divine will, but he does so only in full knowledge of the "Law" and of the inevitable consequences of his actions. The blueprint given by Yahweh to the Israelites for them to follow—the Torah —was conveyed with an unconditional guarantee of success if followed faithfully. Deuteronomy 30:11ff. states the situation with classic simplicity: "For this commandment which I command you this day is not too abstruse for you, nor is it too distant. Nor is it in heaven, that you might say 'Who will ascend for us to heaven to fetch it for us, to let us hear it, that we might observe it?' Nor is it across the sea that you might say 'Who shall go across the sea for us to fetch it for us, to let us hear it, that we might observe it?' For the thing is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart to carry it out." The same text continues with the explicit guarantee of life and prosperity if the commands are faithfully obeyed and an unequivocal warning of extinction if they are disregarded. What is involved here is, in a word, a contract, or "covenant," the essence of which is the freedom of both parties to bind themselves to its terms. This condition could not obtain in a polytheistic system, in which the gods were not absolutely free; the concept of a "covenant" in a polytheistic society is inherently impossible.

The emphasis often placed on the "ethical" character of Israelite monotheism would in this light, therefore, appear to border on the tautologous. The god of Israel is "ethical" precisely because he is the sole deity. It is this uniqueness of Yahweh that carries with it the implication of absolute freedom which is basic to an organized and systematized ethic. Against this background there is little justification for the contempt in which Babylonian religious and ethical thought is often held, *given the polytheistic system under which they had to be conceived.* Nor is this polytheism itself a justifiable object of derision. The theological system of the ancient Greeks was in all essential features similar to that of the Mesopotamians, yet the Greeks have not suffered the abuse and scorn on this account which has traditionally been the lot of the Babylonians. The Babylonians, did, after all, develop a practical system of ethics for human conduct, despite its ineffectiveness as a formula for ultimate salvation. But the wonder is not that their understanding of ethics, sin, and retribution was not as all-embracing or cosmologically anchored as it was in Israelite thought, but that they conceived of such values at all. Indeed, the record of the Babylonians may be of relevance to one of the great issues

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of our time, whether or not man can be committed firmly to an ethical rule of life that is not rooted in theology. The Babylonians deserve our sympathy perhaps, for their religious system denied them the possibility of coming to satisfactory terms with their universe, but even such an attitude must be tempered with admiration, for the three-thousand-year record of Mesopotamian civilization testifies at least to a remarkable human adaptation to a cosmos in which the future of man was viewed as hopeless.

The seeming preoccupation of Biblical literature with the issue of sin and punishment is similarly a corollary of Israelite monotheism, and deserves no special praise on its own account. By their very possession of the "blueprint," the ideal norms of human behavior, the Israelites experienced a much more profound sense of human inadequacy and weakness than the Babylonians could. The latter had no standard on which they might pattern their lives. Their sense of guilt has a hopeless, almost amoral, character about it; there was always an awareness that their fate in the last resort did not necessarily depend on their guilt or innocence, but on the gods' private purposes. But the possession by the Israelites of such a standard afforded them not only a real perspective on their achievements, but a profound optimism as well; the goal or ideal is always in view, and is approachable if not easily attainable. To achieve salvation nothing more was required than to live up to an ideal that was always believed to have been revealed in the past by God and in force for all time to come. The Babylonians enjoyed no similar advantage. Only occasionally was a particularly favored individual—usually in legend—told what to do by a god, and even then it concerned only the immediate present. On the whole, however, the purposes of the gods were concealed, and were in any event usually prompted by immediate circumstances that could not be predicted far in advance.

The only recourse open to the Babylonians for determining the will of the gods was the process of divination, a procedure which could yield a "message" or "directive" only in the context of the moment, and which had to be instituted on every occasion when knowledge of the god's disposition—his motives were not of human concern—was vital for the undertaking at hand. It is of significance that the message or directive which the divinatory procedure was designed to disclose was called by the Babylonians *tertu*, a word cognate with Hebrew *torah*. The "torah" of the Babylonians, in a real sense, was something that had to be repeatedly elicited from the gods—virtually against their will—as the occasion arose, by the varied and devious means which constituted the elaborate pseudo-science of divination, of which astrology was only the latest and best-known form. Pathetic and barren as all this activity might appear to us today, there was no other method available to the Mesopotamians for ascertaining the will of the gods. The security offered by the monotheistic God of Israel, through a revelation valid for all times, was unavailable to the Babylonians, for their gods, as we have seen, were themselves in no position to grant it.

V

It will be clear then from the foregoing that most of the features of Babylonian religion which appear base or primitive to modern Western thought are only the inherent characteristics of a polytheistic theology. Western theology feels itself properly indebted to Israelite monotheism for having provided a rationalized basis for a coherent system of ethics offering a hopeful view of man's fate. Such a cosmic view could not have developed within Babylonian polytheism. Yet to hold Babylonian religious thought and ethics in contempt because of this is as legitimate as despising the elephant because he cannot outrace the horse.

In the contrast between a polytheistic system and all its implications and a monotheistic theology and all that it implies, lies the fundamental difference between Babylonia and Israel. But it must constantly be remembered that despite their gloomy view of man's condition, the Mesopotamians were compelled as a matter of practical necessity to organize their society in accordance with at least a *pragmatic* ethic. Men have always demanded ethical behavior on the part of their fellow men, failing at the same time to apply similar standards to their own conduct. The Babylonian gods too, although not themselves *bound* by moral or ethical principles, nevertheless appreciated them and expected man to live by them. The Babylonians, it would seem, fashioned their gods in their own image more faithfully than the Israelites did theirs. The appreciation by the Babylonians of morality and ethical conduct was as intense as that of any nation of the

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ancient world, and perhaps of the modern as well; their hymns, prayers, and wisdom literature, not to mention the vast and direct evidence of their law promulgations and untold thousands of surviving legal documents, imply precisely this unending concern for justice and morality.

Bearing in mind the fundamental contrast in the theologies and world views of the Babylonians and the Israelites, we may return to the comparison of their respective treatments of material common to both of them, such as the Flood episode which we have used as the example in this essay. It will in the first place have to be recognized that the ethical motivations explicit in both versions do not do great credit to the highest concepts of either civilization. We should be in a particularly unfortunate position if we were compelled to deduce all the ethical implications of the Israelite cosmic view from the Flood episode, or, for that matter, from all the narratives in the book of Genesis. But once we are aware of these implications—from other Biblical sources—we may detect their influence even in these portions.

We are struck, then, by the virtually complete absence in the Biblical Flood story of all the mythological byplay which permeates the Babylonian account. Where the Biblical story, for instance, describes the action of the storm as extreme but natural meteorological manifestations, the Babylonian account portrays it in terms of actions by various gods. The Biblical scholars have, of course, appealed also to this as evidence for the more "primitive" character of the Babylonian account. Yet if we recall that mythology, as we defined it earlier, is a corollary of a polytheistic theology and is excluded, by the same token, from a monotheistic one, we may view each version as self-consistent. Nor is there any need to imagine the early Israelite storytellers consciously editing the story they received from Mesopotamia by excising all the "offensive" mythological and polytheistic elements before it might be fit for "local consumption." The Israelite authors, rather, never really "heard" the story in its Babylonian form, for it would have been totally incomprehensible to them. If the notions of edition and excision are at all applicable, these processes must be thought of as unconscious; as the basic elements of the original tale were assimilated by Israelite tradition they were naturally and spontaneously harmonized with the Israelite cosmic view. Elements which were incompatible with this view disappeared of their own accord.

On the other hand, some elements which to modern theological sensibilities appear offensive, but are not intrinsically incompatible with monotheism, are found in the Biblical as well as the Babylonian account. Thus we read in the Biblical story that God locks the boat after Noah and his company are safely aboard, which contrasts with the Babylonian version in which Utanapishtim locks the door himself. Or again, at the end of the Flood we read that "God smelled the sweet savor," a clear echo of the Babylonian scene in which "the gods crowded like flies around the sacrificer." Neither scene in the one version can be said to be "more elevated" in conception than its counterpart in the other version. Yet both versions are internally consistent with their respective theological approach. The Biblical scenes are not mythological, they are only extremely personal or anthropomorphized. What seems to be embarrassing to modern theological conceptions is at bottom only a matter of taste and degree. It can hardly be argued that personalization of the deity is incompatible with even the most exalted brand of monotheism. The God of Reinhold Niebuhr is, after all, identical in all essential respects with "De Lawd" of *The Green Pastures*. Numerous scenes of this type are found throughout the narrative and even the prophetical portions of the Old Testament. Such scenes are no more to be construed as vestiges of "crude" polytheism—as they often have been by Biblical theologians—than are allusions to God's sight, hearing, or love. They are the natural consequence of the conception of a personal god, and are common to polytheism and monotheism alike.

WHEN Delitzsch appealed to certain scenes in the Babylonian Flood story to support his contention that Utanapishtim is presented as a far nobler character than Noah—an argument for which we were able to cite even stronger evidence—it was apparent that he, as well as his critics, was not aware of the essential difference in approach between the two versions. In the Babylonian story the central character and focus of attention is Utanapishtim and the circumstances which enabled him to achieve immortality. It is the story of a human experience in which the role of the gods is secondary. The climax is the

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bestowal of immortality on the hero. Although the Biblical tale opens with the statement "This is the story of Noah," it is really not the story of Noah; he is just the subject of the moment. The Flood episode, regardless of its original character, had already been recast to fit into a conscious progression of history in which the central theme is God and his dealings with mankind. The points of emphasis in the story are the wickedness of mankind, the contrasting righteousness of Noah, and his consequent exemption by God from the ensuing punishment. But the climax of the story is the covenant made by God never again to send a deluge against mankind, and in this climax—which is in fact the point of the entire story—Noah plays a small role indeed. The covenant made by God is not with Noah alone but with all earthly life. Having received his reward from God for his righteousness, Noah resumes his more modest role in the scheme of Biblical genealogy.

The failure of the Biblical narrative to demonstrate by detail the kindliness and saintliness of Noah is therefore neither an unfortunate omission nor a blemish on the ethical character of the narrative. Such details might have enhanced the artistry of the story, but their essential irrelevance to the theme would have obscured the focal point of the episode. The story thereby retains an austere and unadorned character by comparison with the Babylonian tale. It is significant, in this connection, that the rabbis felt these omissions as deficiencies, and proceeded to add just such midrashic embellishments as were explicit in the Babylonian account. But these are testimony only to the touching human qualities of the rabbis themselves, and serve to explain why the Babylonian Flood story is so much more appealing to our senses than is the Biblical version. And this contrast in focus between the two versions is again only the reflection of the contrasting theological approaches of the two civilizations. The gods of the Babylonians, though more human in attributes and qualities than Yahweh of the Israelites, are yet more remote from human approach and understanding; they do not normally reveal to man their wishes and their plans. What occurs on earth, though attributed to the will of the gods, cannot be described in terms of divine commands and compliance with them. Earthly events and institutions can only be described as the work of men. The famous laws of Hammurabi are, in the words of the prologue and epilogue to the laws, the work of the king himself. They are *not* received from Shamash, the god of justice. This god is conceived of as approving and demanding just action on earth, but he does not "reveal the Law" itself, as the Law of Israel is revealed by Yahweh himself. In the Flood episode, too, this difference is apparent. In the Babylonian account, although the flood is sent by the gods, the events are described from the human point of view; it is a tale of the experiences of human beings. The Biblical story is but a chapter in a larger work, in which every episode is construed as a revelation by Yahweh of his will together with its earthly consequences. The perspective of the Biblical Flood tale is from the vantage point of the divine, and not that of man.

VI

Having set forth the view that most of the differences between Babylonian and Biblical literature and thought can be attributed directly or indirectly to the contrast between polytheism and monotheism, we must deal at last with the alleged evidence that the Babylonians themselves ultimately approached the monotheistic conception. The text to which Delitzsch appealed in support of this proposition is a late one, in which the various gods are correlated with Marduk, the god of Babylon, in their several spheres of activity thus: Ninurta—Marduk of cultivation; Nergal—Marduk of war; Enlil—Marduk of dominion and counsel; Nabu—Marduk of fortune; Sin—Marduk as illuminator of the night; Shamash—Marduk of truth; Adad—Marduk of rain.

Since Delitzsch's time, similar texts have become known, one of which identifies the gods with the various parts of the body of the god Ninurta; another Assyrian text correlates the activities of the other gods with aspects of Ashur, the chief god of the Assyrians, and still another equates all the female deities with Ishtar, the great goddess of love and war. No serious student of the history of religion today would consider speculations of this kind as evidence for monotheism. They do indicate a common tendency towards syncretism, the identification of the different and independent personalities of the various deities as aspects of a single god. This god is thereby perhaps magnified, but he is not basically transformed in any qualitative way. Such speculations are not monotheistic, for these other personalities

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continue to have their independent existence in the minds of the very same speculators, as was the case with the worship of Amon-Re during the Empire period in ancient Egypt. The worship of one god is itself not evidence of monotheism. It is best characterized as henotheism or monolatry, a system in which the existence *and effectiveness* of a plurality of deities is recognized within any one civilization although the attention of the worshiper for varying lengths of time and in different localities may be focused on a single one of these deities to the virtual exclusion of the others.

The tendency on the part of certain schools of thought to see in such manifestations tentative gropings toward monotheism is to be attributed in the first place to the tenacious hold which the evolutionary theories of the late 19th century still have on the religiously oriented Western mind. Anthropologists have long since discarded the theory of Tylor which postulated the progression of the religious development of the human race from animism to the belief in a supreme deity. And despite the patent absurdities in the "devolutionary" theory of Pater W. Schmidt and his school, the existence of true monotheistic beliefs in primitive cultures cannot be denied. The second reason for the tenacity of the evolutionary theory is the understandable desire of the educated layman to find a rational explanation for the development of monotheism in Israel in the midst of polytheistic surroundings. The evolutionary theory satisfied this desire by supplying the "missing link" of monolatry or henotheism. The fallacy inherent in the entire structure, which has been supported by the egocentricity of Western civilization, has been laid bare by Paul Radin, and need not be elaborated here.* Suffice it to say that factual anthropological data have demonstrated that the monotheistic conception of the cosmos can be, and, in fact, has been noted at all stages of social development side by side with the polytheistic conception. And although both views may be found concurrently in the same society, neither is prior to the other; they are in fact mutually exclusive and one cannot develop out of the other.

Monotheism, as Y. Kaufman recently said,† cannot be reached by the gradual reduction of the number of gods to one. Such a process has not been demonstrated in any society, present or past. At some time during the formative period of the Israelite nation, some individual *thinkers,* exactly as has been the case with individuals in primitive societies, viewed the cosmos in a way totally at variance with their co-nationals and contemporaries elsewhere in the civilized world. Following Radin, we may concede the possibility—perhaps the probability—that individuals in ancient Mesopotamia saw the universe in the same light. What is historically significant, however, is not the original conception, which can be found independently in various cultures, but that somehow in ancient Israel alone, this conception—as Radin has shown, usually a minority view—ultimately predominated over the other. The factors which contributed to the establishment of monotheism as the dominant theological view of the Israelites cannot have been inherent in the view itself. This is proved by its failure to take hold in other cultures. The success of monotheism in Israel must therefore be rooted in other conditions, which may be subsumed under the term environmental. To attempt to trace them would be outside the purpose of the present essay.

AT ALL events, Delitzsch was justified, in the light of the prevailing view of the history of religion in his day, in appealing to such "monotheistic" Babylonian texts in support of his thesis. It was in fact an extremely telling point to which there could be no rejoinder. The orthodox theological approach of his critics had itself enthusiastically adopted the evolutionary view of the religious development of mankind, for it provided for the first time a scientific support for Christian apologetic. But if this evolution was possible within the religion of Israel, on what scientific grounds could it be excluded elsewhere? The text adduced by Delitzsch was meant to demonstrate that this "natural" process was not the exclusive property of the Israelites, but took place in Babylonia too, although it did not reach the level it ultimately attained among the Israelites. Against this kind of onslaught there was only one place of refuge, that of dogma; under the comfortable shelter of the belief in the divine election of Israel, all shades of opinion critical of Delitzsch took cover.

The syncretistic tendency manifested in the

*For a concise summary and evaluation of the entire question see Paul Radin, *Primitive Man as a Philosopher*, chapter 18.

†*Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People*, edited by Leo W. Schwarz (1957).

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Babylonian texts alluded to above cannot properly, therefore, be considered even as a "stage on the road towards monotheism." When modern scholars evaluate such speculations as genuinely monotheistic, it is a manifestation only of the attraction that the evolutionary theory still holds for Christian theology. The Babylonian evidence indicates, in the first place, that the other gods did not cease to exist as a result of these speculations. The same thinkers, at other moments, could and did conceive of the separate aspects of the syncretistic deity in their original form, as individual wills and personalities. Secondly, far from approaching the attributes and conception of a true monotheistic god in all his transcendence and omnipotence, this deity remained in every essential characteristic the restricted deity of a polytheistic theology. Nothing has happened to him except that he has been aggrandized.

IN SUMMARY, then, it may be said that no comparisons between Babylonian and Biblical traditions can be undertaken without constant awareness of the polarity of the Babylonian and Israelite cosmic views, and of the profound effect this contrast had in the religious and cultural development within each civilization. Each system, to be sure, did experience an evolution, but these were internal evolutions; there was never a convergence of the two views towards each other, or, more exactly, a convergence of the polytheistic view towards the monotheistic one. Western man, as the heir of the Israelite tradition, feels that the monotheistic approach affords a firmer basis for his spiritual integration and reconciliation with the universe than was possible within the polytheistic cosmic view of the Babylonians. But this is hardly sufficient warrant for the abuse that the Babylonian experience has suffered at the hands of Western religious scholarship, whether in the form of unconscious condescension or as outright contempt. When Israel was born, civilization in Mesopotamia, based on a social order conceived in terms of high moral and ethical ideals, was already two thousand years old, and the material and intellectual products of this civilization had been diffused all over western Asia. Despite the profound difference of their cosmic orientation from that of the nations around them, the Israelites could and did assimilate with profit such social institutions, literary creations, and even religious usages which served as the practical basis of their own civilization, and which afforded them the institutional framework for the worship of their unique God.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

The Problem of the Gifted

To the Editor of Commentary:

Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, in his "Sputnik and Segregation" (October), deftly ridicules *Life* magazine for vulgarizing and reducing to offensive stereotypes a serious plan for education. I should be the last person to deny Dr. Bettelheim his fun. . . . But he attacks the plan itself (Professor Paul Woodring's proposals in *A Fourth of a Nation*) by attacking what he admits is a misunderstanding of it. In brief, he comes close to stating (by innuendo, by applying Orwell's political satire to education, and by salting the ever raw guilt-feelings of liberals who oppose segregation) that special or accelerated education for the able or gifted is as undemocratic as racial segregation.

This is an attractive notion to some people, and, though I think it false, it can be defended. But it ought not to be defended with such meager documentation. . . . Dr. Bettelheim himself has shown elsewhere that gifted children can be retarded or intellectually crippled by unfavorable situations; yet he smugly refers to "scientific talent—something, after all, no known school system has so far succeeded in suppressing." Relax, says the doctor: no mute uncalculused Newton ever existed. "But again, why all this fuss about the gifted child? Have these so-called gifted children been winding up in coal mines?" In his zeal to belabor the upper-class liberal, Dr. Bettelheim is willing to forget the economics he will use so convincingly two pages further on. . . .

He is no doubt right, though perhaps utopian, in his plea for the use of the best teachers to teach the "educationally underprivileged." But his often transparently expressed feeling that our schools cannot really harm gifted children by boredom or repetition (but only by leaving them "intellectually exhausted"—a prospect that I find as alluringly remote as the end of any other rainbow) makes me raise another question: if we cannot harm gifted children or suppress scientific talent, is it not equally true that there is no way to help them or encourage scientific talent? May we not solve the problem of gifted children by ignoring them?

Spencer Brown

Pleasantville, N.Y.

Dr. Bettelheim *writes:*

I am afraid that Mr. Brown misunderstood my intentions. I did not claim to have seen the truth, or to know the answers to the extremely complex question of how to deal with the present educational impasse. All I tried to do was summed up in the sentence with which I deliberately ended: let's have some second thoughts while there is still time. . . . The only specific recommendation I made was that what we need most of all are better schools and better teaching for the socially and economically underprivileged. With that, I believe, everybody must heartily agree.

But mainly, I tried to suggest a possible connection between the demands for desegregation and for better facilities for the gifted. This point Mr. Brown does not discuss. A second point I made was that the demand for "better schools" is as empty as the desire for the "good life," or for "virtue": empty because everybody must be for it. . . . Everybody wants better schools; the problem lies in what this implies in practice—who will have to pay the price for them? In my opinion, if Dr. Woodring's proposals were put into practice, the already disadvantaged groups would have to pay this price; this is a point which, to my knowledge, has not received enough widespread consideration. . . . Mr. Brown's letter suggests that I have succeeded, at least, in getting some readers to think about the questions involved.

As to Mr. Brown's final point: no doubt any existing school system implies the potentiality to harm or to encourage any particular group of children, including gifted children. One and the same educational system will encourage the scientific talents of some, while frustrating those of others. This is owing to the wide variation in human personalities, which leads some pupils to wish to conform to their teachers' demands, others to show their mettle by developing in opposition to their teachers' open or implied desires. But here we have a complex issue which would require another special article, and a necessary one, on the education of the gifted child. . . . In my present article, I simply chose to present a relatively short argument on the possible relation of two social phenomena. . . .

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Still, I should like to add that in my experience I have all too often seen that the curricula, or the parental influences, which tried deliberately to encourage the talent of the gifted child ended up in harming the child, while only occasionally succeeding in developing the talent. Thus, even forgetting the issue of whether special schools for gifted children are democratic, what worries me about the present-day discussion is that all too much emphasis is placed simply on wishing to develop the talent, and not enough consideration is given to the question whether such encouragement of talent might not lead to harming the child *and* society. . . .

To the Editor of Commentary:

This is to express my thanks to Commentary for having published "Sputnik and Segregation" by Bruno Bettelheim. . . . He says so well what so badly needed to be said by those who know whereof they speak.

During the thirty years I taught in a large high school in Detroit, I saw for myself some of the problems that arose when the *xyz* grouping was tried. I saw, too, how the "better" teachers somehow seemed to be sent to the so-called "better" schools where the students were over- rather than underprivileged. Now we have segregated groups in Math and Science. Many teachers whom I know have grave doubts about the wisdom of the experiment of the kind of accelerated programs that Dr. Bettelheim discusses in his article, and which are now in effect in several Detroit high schools.

The smart thing to do nowadays is to get engineers and Math and Science students out of school twice as fast as before, and never mind the Humanities and the enriched curriculum. We ignore the fact that more than 10 per cent of Russia's national income is spent on education as compared with our 3 per cent, or that they have one teacher for 17 students as compared with our 27. (That figure of 27 fascinates me—I always had closer to 40!) The excitement about doing something to get Federal aid to education has died down.

How temperately Dr. Bettelheim takes issue with Professor Woodring's philosophy of education as he discusses the latter's proposals for the new era! How well he challenges the thinking, or lack of it, behind the frenzied grasping of solutions to our problem of "catching up with the Russians," and how clearly he points out the dangers inherent in this superficial approach. What happens to us as a democracy seems to be ignored by educators who should know better.

I am grateful for articles like this that stimulate our thinking, and challenge the wisdom of the road we seem to be choosing in educating our children.

Frieda Paperno Korner

Detroit, Michigan

[*More correspondence on Dr. Bettelheim's article will appear in the December number.—Ed.*]

To the Editor of Commentary:

Professor Bettelheim's article is a magnificently sensible answer to those who desire the creation of an intellectual elite.

A further point worth noting in connection with his view is that educational facilities for adults are pitifully inadequate. With the possible exception of New York, no American city provides for the needs of those persons employed in relatively low-paying jobs who have left school at or before the twelfth-grade level and who may desire further non-technical education. Where limited adult education courses are available, they are generally expensive and their content is usually attractive only to middle-class people. No attempt is made to stimulate the interest of others, aside from an occasional newspaper announcement or a "labor education" program devoted to training union functionaries. The assumption upon which most university-sponsored extension courses are based is that working-class people cannot be interested in such matters.

Paul Breslow

New York City

Moses, Freud, Bakan

To the Editor of Commentary:

David Bakan's assertion ("Moses in the Thought of Freud," October) that "Freud's assertion that 'Moses . . . was an Egyptian whom a people needed to make into a Jew' can more meaningfully be formulated as *Moses was a Jew whom Freud needed to make into a Gentile*" can more intelligibly be formulated as Bakan is a psychologist with a good deal of time on his hands, or else a parodist with a marvelously straight face. Thank you for this amusing ambivalent interpretation.

Walter Goodman

New York City

Praise

To the Editor of Commentary:

Congratulations on your article "Life in the U.S. Army," which I read in a recent copy of Commentary (September). My hat is off to Harris Dienstfrey and to your magazine. . . .

Jay D. Paul (O.D.)

Army and Navy Hospital
Hot Springs, Arkansas

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

Abstract Jewishness

POEMS OF A JEW. By KARL SHAPIRO. Random House. 71 pp. $3.50.

Reviewed by IRVING FELDMAN

IT IS disappointing to find the rather dramatic title of this collection of poems and its short introductory essay, in which incoherence tempers hysteria, followed by the tame and all-too-familiar sheep which are the poems themselves. After all, were so gigantic a shepherd and so rabid a sheepdog needed to usher in these busy, skipping poems (reprinted in the great majority from other of Shapiro's collections of poems)? Though often unamiable, they hardly seem up to the ferocity of the Introduction. And one is mightily tempted to chasten the metaphysical ambitions of the title with all sorts of modest qualifications, to make it something like "Selected Poems of a Third-Generation Modern American Jew," etc.

Perhaps it is unfair to take seriously the pretentious nonsense of this Introduction. It begins unpromisingly enough: "These poems are not for poets. [*Ouch!*] They are for people who derive some strength of meaning from the writings of poets. . . . It is good to read poems for their own sake, but it is also good to read them as documents. These poems are documents of an obsession." The object of this obsession is the Jew, who, Shapiro goes on, is indefinable, indeed "this defiance of definition is the central meaning of Jewish consciousness. For to be a Jew is to be in a certain state of consciousness which is inescapable. As everyone knows, a Jew who becomes an atheist remains a Jew. A Jew who becomes a Catholic remains a Jew." According to Shapiro "the Jewish identity, with or without religion, with or without history, is the significant fact . . . and the word *Jew* retains its eternal shock, a shock that has nothing to do with Christ or the Crucifixion." There follows a brief discussion of Judaism, which, Shapiro finds, having moved the Jew beyond religion, art, literature, philosophy, and mysticism, has yet left him "absolutely committed to the world"; and "the Jew represents the primitive ego of the human race." Then, following a brief statement on Jewish history, Shapiro has it that "the free modern Jew . . . is neither hero nor victim. He is man left over, after everything that can happen has happened."

It is hard to believe that any of this is intended to be rational discourse. Maybe a document. Maybe a dithyramb. And yet something is to be made of this symbolic Jew to whom even Shapiro is forced to restore a semblance of his history and religion. As I see it, far from being the archetypal figure Shapiro would make of him, he serves to document what is perhaps the penultimate development of American Jewish experience. If Jewish religion, tradition, and history remained the focal point of the immigrant Jew and became a source of division (with its concomitants of punctilio and nostalgia) for his sons, Shapiro's Jewishness, or, rather, Jewness, is surely third-generation—at the most, nominalistic, at the least, abstract and symbolic. For precisely what seems to be lacking here is a central Jewish consciousness. Instead, we have its exact opposite: a Jewish identity which is completely external, hinging as it does on the fact that there are some people who call others Jews and some who are called Jews. If "the word *Jew* retains its eternal shock" (in the poem "Jew" it is put, "But the name is a language itself . . . ever and ever a blow on our heart like a fist") it does so because to the assimilated American Jew it must seem eminently unfair that he be called a Jew, even, at times, that there be Jews at all.

As much may be said for Shapiro's mythicizing of the Jew: it is an unmistakable sign of a waning Jewish identity. Like the contemporary American myths of love and the family and contemporary mythomania itself, it does not bespeak the revival of a particular institution or experience, it signifies their death; they have given up the ghost. Shapiro's mythic Jew is such a ghost. The "free modern Jew,"

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alienated from his Jewishness, finds it again stripped of its carnal trappings of religion and history and poised like a *doppelgänger* at a mysterious distance from him. Indeed he is "man left over, after everything that can happen has happened." But what has happened is that, except in name only, he is no longer a Jew. Jewishness has become as mythical to this neo-Semite as it is to anti-Semites.

The poems themselves bear this out in their own way. Sunday, Christmas, and confirmation suggest themselves as occasions for poems where the Jewish holidays and ceremonies do not. In fact, there are only two out-and-out Jewish figures in these poems—the donation collector of "Messias" and the subject of "My Grandmother," the one a figure of terror, the other of pity, both, that is, figures of psychic distance. However, it should be added that the terror is resolved in a rather tepid irony and the pity strikingly gives way to complaint:

I pity her life of deaths, the agony of her own,
But most that history moved her through
Stranger lands and many houses,
Taking her exile for granted, confusing
The tongues and tasks of her children's
children.

Furthermore, the rare Biblical subjects dealt with by Shapiro, as in "The Murder of Moses" or "Adam and Eve," are hardly treated with any freshness of vision. They are "new look," Judaism in the Freudian perspective. And poems like "The Alphabet," "Jew," and "The Synagogue" which attempt to block out a definition of Jewish identity along the lines laid out in the Introduction are among Shapiro's dullest and most factitious. A Jewish identity is neither created nor creative here, it is pieced together.

Viewed as documents, these poems seem to lack an inner Jewish consciousness; viewed as art, they lack lyric centrality. Shapiro is obviously a warm and earnest poet, but his is not a lyric talent. His more successful poems, like "University" and "The Southerner," are constructed poems and not poems of a passion growing incarnate. Typically, they deal discursively with some limited, and often ephemeral, cultural phenomenon; they analyze, compare, introduce allusions, and finally try to envelop the subject in a broader-ranging irony. They are busy poems, and they get things done. But once the guide of an external subject has been left behind and the lyric is broached, the result is a hodgepodge of rhetorical inflections, rhythms, and diction which lacks all organic unity or even naturalness and ease of expression. And all too often he lets his machinery and his kitbag of contemporaneity, and even his very earnestness, stifle the nascent poem. "The Olive Tree" provides a fair sample of these difficulties. First, the setting is described: "Save for a lustreless honing-stone of moon/ The sky stretches its flawless canopy of silk . . ." and this then gives way to a generalized description of the olive tree: "You cannot find in twisted Italy/ So straight a one; it stands not on a crag." I, for one, can't understand what the little tune of the first verse-and-a-half is doing here, or why it should be followed by the heavy inversion of "it stands not on a crag." Be that as it may, after a closer look at the tree and its fruit, the poem goes on to conclude:

The leaves ride boat-like in the brimming sun,
Going nowhere and scooping up the light.
It is the silver tree, the holy tree,
Tree of all attributes.
Now on the lawn
The olives fall by thousands, and I delight
To shed my tennis shoes and walk on them,
Pressing them coldly into the deep grass,
In love and reverence for the total loss.

I pass over the unnatural (and here self-contradictory) conjunction of moon and "brimming sun" in the same sky—though this is indicative of the absence of a true visual, that is, personal, center in the poem and, therefore, of a failure to keep the natural and the symbolic in accord. The poem's ending suffers differently. The last verse of the first stanza has sucked the egg of wisdom dry and the climactic vision of the falling olives is, therefore, the merest shell and is immediately trampled down by those size-14 topical "tennis shoes"—which themselves move on all too hastily to the final, and unconvincing, moral.

Though the final impression of this volume is unsatisfactory, it is noteworthy in one important respect: it clearly marks the intensity of Shapiro's effort to broaden and deepen his poetry. I think he has gone overboard in this, but it is hard to think of one of our younger poets—these titans of poetry's Junior Chamber of Commerce—who could not use such a dunking. Or with courage enough to follow Shapiro into the drink.

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Intellectual Treat

CRITIQUE OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY. By WALTER KAUFMANN. Harper. 325 pp. $5.00.

Reviewed by WILLIAM W. BARTLEY, III

SOME future cultural historian may write a monumental study of the pervasive image of the "doctor" in present-day intellectual expression. Interest in those who heal is no longer focused on the medical profession, although the end of the March of Dimes and the beginning of the March to the Couch have both increased the professional's cultural charisma. Our newspaper columns, our philosophy, theology, and political thinking are punctuated with claims about "medicine for a sick society," "concept healing," and "physicians of culture." Not long ago the chaplain to England's Queen issued a special call for "doctors for a sick society" to treat the "diseases of the body politic." Less optimistic, another Anglican—Dr. Arnold Toynbee—has placed Western society in the terminal ward, his only prescription, "Hope for a miracle, and pray."

What a refreshing experience, then, to find a Princeton philosophy professor and Nietzsche scholar, Walter Kaufmann, drawing a map of the hospital wards and writing a detailed and delightful critique of our contemporary half-Cassandras: those who do, indeed, prophesy gloom; but who do *not* speak the truth, and *are* believed. Since his book is not only well written, but also the only existing text combining detailed understanding, sympathy, and criticism of *both* existentialism and analytic philosophy, it becomes a "must" for any man's spiritual medicine cabinet. Add to this a careful critique of neo-orthodoxy, the Higher Criticism, de-mythologizing, mysticism, Freudian psychology, and certain aspects of Judaism and Buddhism, and the intellectual treat is obvious. Kaufmann understands "critique" in the Kantian sense: to show the limits of what is criticized, what it can and cannot do, its value and its abuses. He is emphatically not out to "debunk" anything, any more than Kant was out to debunk "Reason."

The two "timeless tendencies" of analytical philosophy and existentialism both err, according to Kaufmann, in providing an inadequate "Vision of Man." Rejecting the popular view that analytical philosophers are overly critical, Kaufmann also dismisses the charge that they are "unable to make up their minds" as a "myth popular in institutions." The philosophic flight, he holds, is a *deliberate* decision to rest complacent in no other man's intellectual mansion, but to continue to explore throughout one's life. The failure of the logical analysts lies in refusing to explore the most important areas of human experience. In their search for the clean-cut, they tend to avoid the "messy" areas of human emotion and moral ambiguity. The "British Vision of Man" (which Kaufmann suggests underlies much of analytic philosophy) appears to be that of the British officer in *The Bridge on the River Kwai:* one remembers one's manners, keeps one's feelings to oneself, and—above all—sticks to the rules.

Existentialist man, on the other hand, is haunted by endless dread, fear of death, despair. He wallows in the messiest and most complex of human feelings, and in his desperation makes "leaps of faith" or lapses into the "night of the soul." His talk, as confused as his intellectual and emotional condition, is of "the Encompassing," the "Nothing," the "Ground of Being." He is not "at home in the world," but is trapped in it. "Between these extremes," Kaufmann writes, "philosophy is lost." And between the extremes there have always been the great philosophers, those who have seen the ambiguity and complexity of life, and the folly of either extreme. Kaufmann wishes to show that the medicine of the great thinkers—including Socrates, Plato, Nietzsche, Goethe, and Wittgenstein—differs profoundly from most popular patent drugs on the contemporary market place. The contradictory claims of these medicines represent not simply a matter of temperament: important philosophical disagreements separate the rival camps.

ONE of the most important is the issue of "truth," which Kaufmann discusses in a penetrating way, combining the insights of pragmatism with Oxford philosophy and focusing these on recent theology. He champions the propositional view of "the true" as "the correct." Many writers, he suggests, find "mere correctness" somehow inadequate as a characterization of truth. Something as rare and important as truth must be much bigger. *King Lear* is true, they argue, but the statement that *"King Lear* was written by Shakespeare" is *only* correct. Such treatment of "truth" is closely related to, although not identical with,

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the popular theological distinction between "belief in" and "belief that," e.g. in Buber's discussion of "Two Types of Faith," or in Tillich's subjective and objective criteria for truth. Kaufmann notes that to say one "believes in" *King Lear* or *Antigone,* or that these plays are "true," is not very different, according to this usage, from the gushing tribute that they are "divine." "One gathers that praise is intended, but the rest is vagueness. We can say that these plays are beautiful, profound, or deeply moving, that they change our attitudes or valuations, that they broaden our understanding of man's nature or of man's condition, or that every time we read them we make new discoveries. There is no lack of words, and a profound account is not one that misuses the word 'true,' albeit systematically, but one that introduces some precision, *explains* our admiration, and brings out something we did not see so well before."

Although Professor Kaufmann is, I think, right in his own "univocal" conception of truth, he will have more trouble convincing his opponents on this point than on any other he deals with in the book. The broader usage of "true" is too widespread, and—more important—too convenient an apologetic device, for theologians to part with it easily. Even thoroughly disinterested readers may find Kaufmann's recommendation too antiseptic, "philosophical," and arbitrary in its own right. For it is only when one sees the distinction at work in the churches (and in some apologetics) that one realizes how important a recommendation he is making. Thus, to cite but one typical situation: in the various interviews which bishops and church committees hold with ministerial candidates trained in the fashionable new theology, the bishop or the committee may ask: "Do you believe in God?" (meaning "Do you believe that God exists?"). The candidate, who is an atheist—or perhaps (more fashionably) a pantheist—replies, "Yes, I believe in God." There has been agreement about words, and the candidate is usually passed. But one wonders both about the honesty of the candidate and the point of holding the interview in the first place under such conditions. One also wonders about the double life he is likely to lead in his parish, if his sermons mean one thing to him and something else to most members of his congregation.

This practice is facilitated by the wording of the Christian Apostle's Creed: "I *believe in* God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in his only son, Jesus Christ our Lord. . . ." As uttered by many theologians this is not far different from "I *believe in* Lear, King of Britain, and in his only faithful daughter, the martyred Cordelia. . . ." That is to say, "I find *Lear* (or the Gospels) beautiful, profound, and deeply moving. It has caused me to change or modify my valuations and has broadened my understanding of man's condition. Reading *Lear* (or the Gospels) was a discovery of the first order for me!"

This usage of "true" and "believe in" is no less misleading and arbitrary when it is found not in vestry-rooms, but in the writings of the most distinguished theologians. Professor Tillich, for instance, has elaborated his central distinction of "subjective and objective criteria" for the "truth of faith" in a recent book, *Dynamics of Faith,* in the following way: Faith has *subjective truth* in so far as its symbols adequately express an ultimate concern. Adequacy here refers to the power of creating a reply, or action, on the part of the person having that concern. "The criterion of the truth," Tillich notes, "is whether or not it is alive." Faith has *objective truth* in Tillich's theology if its symbols express "the ultimate which is really ultimate." This *means,* according to Tillich, that the symbols imply an element of self-negation, in the sense that they express not only the ultimate, but also their own lack of ultimacy. Tillich finds such a symbol only in the Cross of the Christ. But if one tries to put these "criteria" to work, they turn out to be good for almost nothing. The subjective criterion, for instance, admits any faith whatsoever, no matter how irrational or absurd, as true—so long as it is alive. Since Nazism is presumably dead, Tillich would apparently have to say that it *was* true, but is no longer true. We are given no "subjective" machinery to judge or evaluate faiths: they are either true or dead.

The great philosophers—who were also great doctors—did not indulge in such patchwork, Kaufmann argues. The message of these men is conveyed in Nietzsche's admonition that "having the courage of one's convictions" is a mistake. "Rather, it is a matter of having the courage for an attack on one's convictions!" What is needed is a change of attitude. It is in his elaboration of this point of view that Kaufmann's own prescription lies. One's aim should not be to find a philosophical or religious edifice which one may call home once and for all, Kaufmann urges, but "to rise above

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the darkness in which most men live." One should constantly and deliberately subject one's beliefs to challenge and expect them to be modified and shaped in the process. The most important question to ask when confronting a theologian or philosopher is neither "What does he mean?" nor "Can I be his disciple?" but "What has he seen?"

KAUFMANN's main quarrel with certain well-known contemporary cultural physicians is that they make no attempt to cure complacency and the unrealistic desire for the security of a system of belief and a code of behavior. To do so would be to doctor *men*. These medicine men choose, however, to bandage the old beliefs and codes in a way which will allow complacent men to rest secure in them without fear of embarrassing contradiction. "Doing theology is like doing a jigsaw puzzle in which the verses of Scripture are the pieces: the finished picture is prescribed by each denomination, with a certain latitude allowed. What makes the game so pointless is that you do not have to use all the pieces, and that pieces which do not fit may be reshaped after pronouncing the word 'this means.'"

Instead of playing Dr. Frankenstein and piecing monsters together, the theologians should approach the great creeds and scriptures in the same spirit in which they should approach *Lear* or Buddhism. Kaufmann does not wish to treat them as "mere poetry" or "the Scripture as Literature," but as records of human experience, intellectual and spiritual flight. By putting new wine in old bottles, by forcing ancient answers on new questions, contemporary apologists approach the ancient records in the wrong spirit, sacrificing in the process both intellectual integrity and the chance of experiencing the impact of the creeds they are trying to adjust. In their defense of Jesus, they forget his words: "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; *and both are preserved*" (Luke 5, my italics).

So far so good. But Kaufmann is distressingly obscure about some of the practical implications of his medicine. Suppose one accepts what he says about the dishonesty, superstition, and posturing of contemporary theology and Biblical criticism, and about the slim chance that the situation will substantially improve. Suppose one also shares his sympathy for religion, or at least for "spirituality" and "religiousness." What attitude does one then adopt toward organized religion? Does one join one of the churches or avoid them altogether? The question is profoundly difficult. Some of the issues involved in its answer are, as Kaufmann sees, parallel to those a person must face in assessing his political loyalties, even though the answers hardly need be parallel. The superstition that only Christians can be saved, for instance, is surely no more dangerous than the superstition that only Republicans are righteous, while both are articles of faith in certain quarters.

At one point Kaufmann comes close to giving an answer to the problem. Tragedy, he suggests, opens up the possibility of a profound alternative to religion. The tragic outlook "can be the religion of the irreligious." The living self-sacrifice of the tragic hero, however, can hardly be institutionalized. "The hope that spirituality may be nourished by a few scattered individuals with no commitment to each other but a common respect for the great spirits of the past, in whose works they seek comfort and strength and to whose achievements some of them add in turn, is compatible with a pervasive resignation. It requires no faith in religion. Those who believe that religion has a future, not merely as a vulgar mass movement or a mess of chronic superstitions, should reflect on the idea of the remnant."

But the unorganized remnant which Kaufmann seems to envision is strikingly different from the prophetic conception of the "remnant of Israel" to which he is referring here. As the thought occurs in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, the concept of the religious *community* of the remnant, as well as the conviction that the redemption of the many will come through the service of the few, remain. If the "few scattered individuals" of whom Kaufmann writes withdraw altogether from organized religion, it seems likely that organized religion will quickly become much *more* a vulgar mass movement. It is easy to agree with Kaufmann that "One cannot act nor abstain from acting without incurring guilt," and that "Greatness and guilt belong together." The question which remains is whether one should be guilty in the market place or in the ivory tower. Of course the problem is more difficult today. Jeremiah saw that loyal obedience to God did not depend on the existence

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of the temple at Jerusalem and its sacrifices, or on residence in Palestine, or on circumcision of the flesh. If few men understood this, how less likely it is that many today will understand that loyal obedience to God does not even depend on a belief that he exists.

There are other difficulties and shortcomings in Kaufmann's book. One was to be expected: in discussing so many topics, he makes tenuous generalizations and omits important qualifications. His critique of analytic philosophy provides a fair description only of extremists. Cambridge University's positivist R. B. Braithwaite, to take one example, is so aware of the complexity of moral choice that he thinks the mathematical theory of games is an important tool in providing an adequate description of moral decision procedure. Kaufmann also fails to note that analytical philosophers have been paying increasing attention to history, religion, the law, and politics during the past decade. Nor does he acknowledge, as he fairly should, that the logical analysts' seemingly esoteric problems are very often ones whose answers have vast implications for more traditional philosophical questions. He likewise exaggerates the concern of the existentialists with exclusively "messy" problems. Camus, for instance, has certainly dealt extensively with more "ordinary" types of moral perplexity. Kaufmann's discussions of "existence" and Gestalt psychology also are less than satisfactory.

But Kaufmann's critique nonetheless gives hope of being able to provide an avenue of communication between the rival philosophical camps. It contains the first responsible nontechnical discussion of such important British philosophers as Wittgenstein, John Wisdom, and John Austin. A sympathetic, scholarly, and urbane work, it is a splendid cross-illumination of some contemporary "idols of the tribe."

Algeria and France

ALGERIA: THE REALITIES. By GERMAINE TILLION. Knopf. 115 pp. $3.00.

Reviewed by JOEL CARMICHAEL

ONE of the subtler successes of Leninism has been the gradual permeation of the left intelligentsia by the slogan, "The main enemy is in your own country." The widespread though unconscious acceptance of this attitude is responsible for the quasi-automatic way in which all problems are understood by the left to be best formulated in a way hostile to the traditional interests of one's own country. This hangover of disaffection is most clearly apparent in all discussions of the so-called "colonial" question. In Europe, precisely at a moment when nationalism as such is perceived to be an anachronism at best and a cul-de-sac at worst, the newly awakened nationalism of primitive or backward peoples is commonly hailed by liberals as an indispensable and inevitable stage of progress.

This self-negation in Western society is seen in high relief with respect to Algeria. The French left sees the Algerian rebellion in classic alternatives: oppression versus liberation, nationalism versus imperialism. Also, the social schizophrenia characteristic of the country since the French Revolution makes it all too easy for liberals to see in the "traditional," "national" French values the classic aspect of reaction. Thus the material needs of the Algerian people are overshadowed by the metropolitan preoccupation with the ancient feuds endemic in French society. No real thought is given to the nature of native society; for the liberals as much as for the conservatives a native is only a native, and the real point of the argument over Algeria is found in defying ancient antagonists at home rather than in thinking up plans to better the welfare of the region overseas. It is simply assumed that the entire trouble with the colonial society is the rapacity of the foreign oppressor; once the imperialist bloodsuckers are ejected and a native regime has been established, all will doubtless be sweetness and light.

Algeria: The Realities, the latest authoritative, though slender, book on the Algerian imbroglio, by Germaine Tillion, a professional anthropologist who has spent many years studying the back-country Moslems of Algeria, has an earnest simplicity of approach that is bound to arrest attention. Written in a style of uncompromising starkness, it takes pains to puncture the illusions of all parties to the dispute, from the "colonialist" extremists to the naivest pro-rebels. What emerges is a picture Mlle. Tillion evidently intends to make as discouraging as possible: of a region racked by the profound disproportion between the objectives made attainable by Western civilization and the material pauperization of the population brought about by the inevitable technological contradictions. This is enveloped in the pathos of the thoroughgoing destruction or transposition of

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the old values of native society, so that in addition to their material distress the Moslems are deprived of even their cultural identity, without being provided with an adequate substitute. The basic factor, symptomatic for the whole complex, is the vast increase in Moslem numbers as a result of the sharp decrease in infant mortality. These numbers, though made possible by modern medicine and hygiene, have by far outstripped the material opportunities. Yet the cultural lag makes it impossible for the Moslems to change their intellectual habits in time to adapt themselves to the new Western patterns of life.

This in a nutshell is Mlle. Tillion's exposition of the impasse in French Algeria: the French have no way of providing the mass of Algerians with all the goods produced by the French economy, and the Algerians cannot afford to shake loose of France and be on their own. Now all this is true, indeed truistic. But Mlle. Tillion's method is vitiated by the somewhat priggish condescension which makes so much anthropological comment irritating even when applied to backward societies, and quite irrelevant to advanced societies. Accustomed to assessing the cultural phenomena of more or less sequestered primitive or backward societies, anthropologists tend to imagine themselves competent to judge the complex socio-economic life of great modern collectivities by the limited cultural criteria developed in their parochial studies.

Mlle. Tillion, operating with one or two concepts having to do with the cultural-psychological time-lag of the Algerian masses and the difficulty of shifting from one cultural milieu to another, makes some sweeping pronouncements whose dramatic effect is unfortunately mitigated by a certain sentimental arbitrariness. For one of her main contentions is that in the life of nations the rich get richer and the poor get poorer; the corollary of which is that the nations now being pauperized by the spread of technology are almost bound to deteriorate at an increasing rate unless drastic (though unspecified) steps are taken. The advice Mlle. Tillion finally feels herself competent to give this society in travail is—to produce a mutation! It is a "genuine social mutation" which is "called for" to solve the problems of the "unadapted peoples." This is tantamount to calling for a miracle, since she has already "proved" that the cultural time-lag which makes this miracle indispensable also makes its necessity incomprehensible. None of this leaves us much the wiser.

As a matter of fact, however, if we consider the example of the "pauperized" Russian society which managed to pull itself up by its bootstraps—with grueling sacrifices, to be sure —and has now gone on to sweep an even vaster and still more pauperized community, the Chinese, into the maelstrom of breakneck industrialization, and if one recalls further the limitlessly protean potentialities of present-day technology, the *ipso facto* hopelessness of the Algerian situation becomes far less convincing. Mlle. Tillion's conclusions do not, in fact, warrant her pessimistic pronouncements. In spite of her obvious sympathy for the "nationalist feeling" of the Algerian masses, she comes to the conclusion that their only hope after all lies in a continued alliance with France, which alone possesses the resources of will and ability to burst through the socio-economic impasse

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created in Algeria by the hitherto unregulated capitalist dynamics of the French economy.

The complexities of contemporary politics have dealt rather ironically with Mlle. Tillion: to her distress, in view of her "liberal" line on Algeria, the present de Gaulle regime has apparently been making abundant use of her book, which is of course a tribute to her professional ability and fairmindedness but is nevertheless annoying. Since Mlle. Tillion wrote her book reasons for her rebel sympathies have been destroyed: for non-anthropological reasons—i.e., because of the same political passions her lesser fellows are swayed by—she had chosen to consider the Algerian rebels as representing the Moslem masses, but now that the French referendum has been voted on, and has been overwhelmingly endorsed by the Moslem population of Algeria, it is clear that, whatever Mlle. Tillion's motive is for sympathizing with the rebels, her reasons are not shared by their compatriots.

The only thing, in fact, that could upset this Franco-Algerian symbiosis is a major conflict, the consequences of which would of course be incalculable. Until then it would seem wiser to regard the Franco-Algerian association as an instance in which the problems are for the first time being dealt with as a unit, giving European energy and ingenuity, prodded by Soviet rivalry, another chance to vindicate itself in action.

Journalist's Report

TOWARD THE AUTOMATIC FACTORY: A CASE STUDY OF MEN AND MACHINES. By CHARLES R. WALKER. Yale University Press. 232 pp. $5.00.

Reviewed by ARNOLD M. ROSE

THE automatic factory was already known in the 18th century, but it was only with its extension into many lines of production in the 1950's that it attracted great scientific and public attention. Consideration of the social consequences of automation has ranged from scare thrillers to dull surveys of limited cases. While there is little doubt that the excited nonsense emanating from some "experts" on automation is seriously motivated and presented, it cannot help but confuse the public. Most of the so-called "studies" aren't much better, since they either fail to answer the questions the public is interested in or employ inadequate methods of research. An informed, balanced essay is still the best guide to the social and economic consequences of automation—that is, to all but the technical and organizational descriptions of it.

Walker's study is neither better nor worse than most. It makes some show of following the methodology of the social sciences, but in fact it is a serious journalist's report on his interviews with a number of managers and workers. To begin with, it studies only a *single* plant, the "first continuous seamless pipe mill in the United States," located in the Lorain Works of the National Tube Division of the United States Steel Corporation. Second, no information is given as to the size and the exact basis of selection of the sample of men interviewed. Third, while it is stated that considerable attention was paid to documentary information, the text seldom refers specifically to documents. Fourth, and most important, no statistical summaries of the interviews or observational findings are given; instead we are offered quotations which might very well express the views of two or three men rather than of the workers as a whole. The terms of social science are used—for example, "repeatedly interviewed over the years 1949-1953"—but there is no indication of how many people were interviewed, how often, or how successfully.

But serious journalism needs to be taken seriously; let us see what the author says. There are regular summaries at frequent intervals throughout the book, which conveniently tie together the quotations and the author's brief observations. One of these summaries concerns worker-supervisor relations:

"1. During the first round of interviews workers generally were enthusiastic about the improvement in worker-supervisor relations over the old mill. Relations with all ranks of supervision were close and cordial.

"2. Between the first and second rounds relations had sharply deteriorated. The workers reported that they saw less of their bosses and that interactions were accompanied by pressure, tension, and bad feeling.

"3. The major criticism which workers made of supervision, and especially of top supervision, was that the worker was no longer involved in production problems or asked for his advice and suggestions.

"It is important that the reader remember that the condition and climates of opinion just described reflect a relatively early and still

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transitional period in the history of the mill."

This is informative, but such deterioration of relations can happen in almost any kind of plant at almost any time; we are given no reason to believe that this deterioration is a specific consequence of automation.

Or take the section on pay and incentives: "As far as earnings went, all members of the three crews were pleased. Most were now making more than they had on the old mills under the old plan." It certainly is an acceptable finding that workers are pleased with a raise in pay. But more important questions are: (1) Does automation result in higher pay, and why? (2) Do some workers get displaced, so that only a certain proportion get higher pay and the rest get lower pay or become unemployed? Both these kinds of questions can best be answered by a theoretical economist or by a systematic empiricist.

However, the study contains hints and clues that a theoretical or speculative essay cannot provide. It isn't social science, but it is suggestive and potentially useful. For example, the author writes about a worker's appraisal of his immediate job after three years' experience: "Generally speaking, he believed it to be 'mentally harder' and 'physically easier' than his job on the old mills, but there were certain exceptions to this generalization. The jobs that had not been mechanized when the technological revolution took place were now harder than ever, and harder in proportion to the greatly increased speed of the mill. Whereas at first they had been preferred, they were now resented. The other automatic or semi-automatic jobs also demanded somewhat more of a man's energy, nervously or physically, when the mill went faster. But this added load was more than balanced—for most workers—by a new rhythm that had come into their working day, by an increase in skills, and by a complete loss of fear of the job or the machines. The automatics themselves were given another vote of confidence, but a curious discovery added to the men's morale. They found that under certain conditions manual operation was more efficient than machine operation. In other words, they were still better than the machines."

Following Georges Friedmann, the French industrial sociologist, Walker emphasizes the increasing possibilities, under automation, for man to work at his "natural" individual rhythm.

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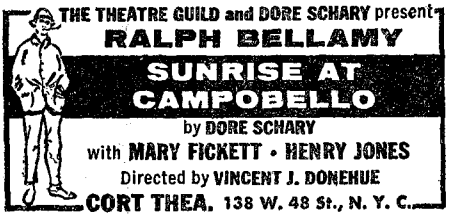
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He also emphasizes the increase in team feeling, as compared to such "obvious factors as high earnings and better foreman-worker relations." Yet the workers' main criticisms were of the incentive pay system and of worker-supervisor relations. Improvements in these two items took place in the plant after the first two years of automation, but it is not clear whether this was *because* of the preliminary findings of the study. An economist might inquire as to why it took so long for pay to go up. The author gives closer attention to supervisor-worker relations—for example, he finds that these are better when the relations among the workers themselves are closer.

Considerable attention is paid to the internal structure of the work group. Not only did the work group become more cohesive under automation, but it changed its attitude from one of welcoming breakdowns of machinery to doing all in its power to prevent them. The work group developed a democratic unanimity of opinion, although no individual member became its consistent leader. Despite their increasingly pro-managerial orientation, most members of the group had given up all thought of promotion within the group or out of it. The author regards this as "unhealthy" but does not attempt to explain it. While he notes that the top management allowed no suggestions for the productive process to emanate from the workers, the original hostility between the two groups disappeared.

The concluding part of the book attempts to take up the broader issues. Because the author is familiar with the literature on technological change, especially the recent studies, this latter portion is more scholarly than the main part of the book, and also more informative and useful as an analysis of the more general

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implications of automation. We learn that for the workers job security is recognized as "the basic value" and rapid technological change is seen as an "implicit threat" to the job and to opportunities for promotion, especially in times of economic recession. Further, the workers hold that the share which labor gets from the benefits of automation is not "fair." After examining all the details of the relations of the workers to the automatized plant, the author concludes that "the machine has here outstripped man," not because it has taken away his chances of being "human" but because man has only begun to explore the new opportunities for growth and a more satisfying work life.

The United States is probably undergoing the most rapid expansion of automation of any country, but it is not the place where the best studies of the impact of automation are being conducted. We have nothing quite comparable to the empirical study by the Englishmen Scott, Banks, Halsey, and Lupton, nor even to the broader gauged speculative study by the Frenchman, Georges Friedmann (for which some of his students have been providing an empirical foundation). The best American work is still in the form of brief essays, such as those by Baldwin and Schultz, by Leontieff, by Sheppard and Faunce. Walker's book adds something to understanding, but provides no significant systematic knowledge nor guide lines for the future organization of knowledge.

Jewish Crisis of Fulfillment

GENERATION OF DECISION. By SOL LIPTZIN. Bloch Publishing Co. 307 pp. $3.95.

Reviewed by ISRAEL KNOX

PROFESSOR LIPTZIN's book is part history, part literary summation, but it is above all a political tract. Its thesis, insofar as it has one, is perhaps suggested in a sentence in the Preface: "The American Jew of the second half of the twentieth century lives in American space and Jewish time."

Now this is a challenging idea, even if not a wholly new one. Abraham Joshua Heschel has dealt with it in a beautiful little book in which he depicts the Sabbath as the symbol of the Jewish preoccupation with time rather than with space. It is one of the presuppositions of Salo Baron's monumental *Social and Religious History of the Jews,* which regards the Jews as a people in history rather than in nature. The prophetic vision of the *beaharit hayamim,* the "end of days," is a vision of time as a movement toward universal redemption. Although Jerusalem as a city acquired a sanctity which Jews have never forgotten, the Decalogue bestows holiness not upon a place or a thing but upon a day, the Sabbath of the week, for which there is no such astronomical warrant as for the month and the year.

When the gentle rabbi of Berditchev, Reb Levi Yitzhok, the son of Sarah, addressed himself to God in this fashion: "Dear God, the English acknowledge a king and the Russians an emperor and the Germans pay homage to their rulers, but Israel, your people, look to you as king and emperor and sovereign," he was really saying that the English and the Russians and all the other nations are lords of space, but Israel is a people in time awaiting the universal redemption of time altogether in the Messianic Age. Thus the Jews dwelled for several thousand years among the nations of the world but had little to do with the affairs of space—government, war, even science—specializing rather in poverty and in ethics: that is, in *halachah,* "walking in the ways of God." Professor Liptzin cites Mark Twain as counselling Jews to persevere in their uniqueness. Tolstoy and Ibsen did so too, urging them to avoid the trap of space, to continue, in effect, to live in time. The trouble is that Professor Liptzin, in the process of developing his theme, turns out himself to be a worshipper of space.

His book begins with an examination of the image—or legend—of the Jew in pre-Colonial England (as diabolical, as Christ-killer), in Puritan America (as Biblical-patriarchal), and in Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America (as the original republican, as opponent of tyranny). In a subsequent series of chapters Professor Liptzin describes the emergence of a corporate Jewish life in America, following the vast immigration from Central and Eastern Europe. He tells in some detail of the institutions that were set up, of the problems that arose, of the hopes which the newcomers brought with them as *their* American dream, and finally of the flight of their children from Jewishness. This flight, as he explains it, did not take the form of a complete break with parents and the past, which was hardly possible, but expressed itself as a sort of "self-

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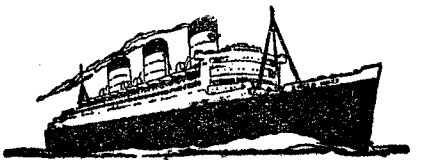
hate" and denigration (*self* referring here to the group from which they were trying to escape). He is thinking primarily of the generation between the First and Second World Wars, and he calls it the Accursed Generation. For corroboration Professor Liptzin inspects the works of such Jewish writers in America as Michael Gold, Ben Hecht, Budd Schulberg (quite suitably), and Waldo Frank (unjustly). He cites Ludwig Lewisohn and Maurice Samuel as "affirmative" writers.

But *The Generation of Decision* does not end on a note of alarm and doubt. Professor Liptzin points to the revived pride in Jewishness among the children of the "accursed generation," which he ascribes to the establishment of the State of Israel: "Every head among them was higher, every back was straighter, every brow was prouder, every mouth was filled with laughter, and every tongue with singing." The legend of the heroic Jew now began to overshadow all other images: "It was the legend of David, the slayer of Goliath. It was the legend of Palmach, of Hagana, of Irgun. . . . The Maccabean Jew reemerged on the world scene and America felt the impact." And if the Jew in America could not emulate the Maccabean Jew in Israel, he could at least dance a hora, learn a few Hebrew phrases, and help Israel financially: "The gay Horas of Israel were danced at parties and clubs to the verge of exhaustion." By doing so he could achieve a creative Jewishness outside the reach of our forebears in Eastern Europe. It is in this spirit of rhapsody that Professor Liptzin writes of the members of Hadassah: "All this ardor for Israel serves the purpose of identifying them with Jewishness in a more joyous and creative way than the way of their grandmothers who wept over Yiddish devotional prayers, who fasted every year on the day of Jerusalem's fall. . . . These women of Hadassah and of similar Zionist groups bring Jewishness into their homes and help to rear a coming generation in a greater understanding of Hebrew culture, Jewish needs, and Israel's role in Jewish survival."

It is no disparagement of Hadassah and of similar groups—Zionist and non-Zionist, religious and secular—to assert that what they have in common with these grandmothers and grandfathers is a tradition, a way, a *derekh* (otherwise there would be no Jewishness at all in America); and that what they do not have in common, or as their own, is a style of



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living, a *nusach,* a concrete expression of the transcendent tradition or *derekh,* as pervasive and distinctive and authentic. Therein lies the difference between fasting on the day of Jerusalem's fall, in as natural and as unpremeditated a manner as weeping over a friend's death or dancing at a wedding, and arranging on a grand scale, with all the fanfare of skilled publicity, a mass meeting in Madison Square Garden. Rallies may be necessary and fund-raising campaigns imperative and an accelerated course in "basic" Hebrew better than nothing, but that by itself is not an answer for a "generation of decision." The tasks that face the Jews in America, as individuals and as a community, are formidable, and our incongruities are rooted in the fact that we have not as yet been able to shape a *nusach* of our own commensurate with our tradition, with a millennial *derekh.* There are plenty of reasons for this but none that is insuperable, and if we see our predicament for what it really is, we shall find that there is no cause for dismay.

Fundamentally, our predicament in America is not unlike that of the Jews in Israel. In both lands the Jews are undergoing a crisis of fulfillment. In America as well as in Israel there has been fulfillment for the Jew: in America, the fulfillment of emancipation without qualification or conditions; in Israel, the fulfillment of political and territorial nationhood. In both Israel and America fulfillment has involved the fateful passage from a settled, unified, "orchestrated" mode of life with its inner certainties amid surrounding dangers, to a mode of life characterized by a tension between freedom and ambiguity, between "legitimacy" in the world of space and precariousness in the world of time. Ben Gurion, for example, is aware of the crisis in America as one of fulfillment, as one of "pleasure and plenty," and has reiterated that we are doomed to perish as a Jewish community. Only recently he said: "Never was such a great Jewish community in such danger of gentle extinction as American Jewry today." But the truth is that there is a crisis of fulfillment in Israel too. Not all Israelis are Jews, and must not Jews as Israelis shed something of their Jewishness too? That Israel will stand forth as a progressive, cultured country seems probable, but its culture will be Israeli in tone and content, as is proper, and not Jewish. The negation of the Diaspora—*shelilat hagalut*—is one tragic way of disrupting the continuity of Jewish time, and the insistence that American Jews must accommodate themselves to Israel's cultural creativity—rather than enjoy equal status with the Jews of Israel as Jews and as sharing with them in the inheritance and destiny of the congregation of Israel, of *Am Yisroel*—is to subordinate Jewish time to Jewish space. Professor Liptzin differs from Ben Gurion in that he does not prophesy catastrophe for the Jews of America, but he too, despite his interest in the "Diaspora," would abandon our spiritual orientation for a geographical one, for one directed toward the State of Israel.

Despite its need for vigilance and strength, and its military victories, the State of Israel cannot—if its moral climate is to be Jewish—put power above holiness and adapt itself completely to the exigencies of space. Since it must do what it is doing for its very existence, there is no escaping crisis and ambiguity. In America, where Jews have found freedom from ancient restrictions and disabilities, they have accomplished much indeed of permanent worth, but they have also tended to adopt the typical pleasures and values of the American middle class—food, gadgets, amusements, sports, comfort. American Jews are inclined to honor the possessor of wealth rather than the *talmid hakham,* to spend more on the swimming pool than on the Jewish education of our children, to make of the synagogue a social rather than a religious center. In both Israel and America there is, as I have said, a *crisis of fulfillment,* and the "homecoming to Jewishness" which Professor Liptzin is advocating requires more than his prescription affords.

Alienated: Indomitable

GIMPEL THE FOOL AND OTHER STORIES. By ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER. Noonday Press. 205 pp. Paperback edition $1.25.

Reviewed by KENNETH REXROTH

RECENTLY I was working in a night club below Cooper Union. I had been out of New York for many years and it was thirty years since I had been in that neighborhood. Late in the wet night, a rainy moon in the sky, I went out for a breath of air and walked up the street looking for the Café Royale. I got to St. Mark's-in-the-Bowerie, and walked all around it, trying to orient myself. There was no doubt about it, the Café Royale was gone

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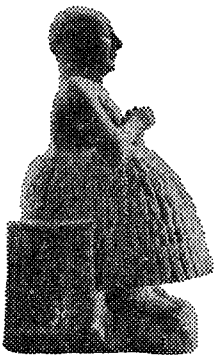
and I couldn't even tell where it had been. Loneliness, nostalgia, the consciousness of age and the passing years, the ache was as much as I could bear. All that bright electric life was gone. How gone it really is, more lost than the noise of the Elevated, long ago under the two o'clock in the morning moon, no one who was not there in the days when it was at its most splendid can ever know.

Yiddish culture is at a discount today. A lot of people seem to think it is counter-revolutionary, if not positively anti-Semitic, to speak the language. There is a curious tendency to refer to the major Yiddish writers as Polish or Russian or German, to describe them in terms of the country of their origin, or even in terms of their subject matter, however many years they may have spent in America. If this goes on, one of the most valuable and, in actual fact, one of the strongest influences in American culture will be forgotten and drop out of sight. For the first quarter of the 20th century New York was one of the literary and theatrical capitals of the world. Not only that, but at the time when American literature in English was struggling with the problems of American provinciality, one of the most intense sectors, the most intense sector really, of our literary life was characterized by its—to borrow a word from Stalin—cosmopolitanism. When people ask me at lectures, "Mr. Rexroth, whom do you consider the leading American poet of the 1900's?" I love to answer, "Why, Stuart Merrill, of course. Who else?" (He wrote in French.) Perhaps that's just a gag, but a good case could be made for the claim that much of the best writing done in America in the first quarter of the century was in Yiddish. I don't think it's really true, but it is sufficiently true to be passionately arguable in one of those passionate arguments that used to sprinkle the whiskers with sour cream in the Café Royale. The café is gone, the arguments are gone, they've discovered sour cream in the bridge clubs of Ashtabula, and there's very little Yiddish literature being written.

But there is Isaac Bashevis Singer. If only he were left writing in Yiddish it would still be an important literary language. He is certainly one of the most remarkable American authors who has ever lived, as he is one of the most intensely Yiddish. Is Yiddish writing sinewy, grotesque, haunted, bitterly comic, deeply compassionate? Singer is close to being



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the most sinewy, grotesque, haunted, bitterly comic, deeply and desperately compassionate of all. Is most of it, at its best, deeply rooted in the ecstatic brotherhood and fantastic folk culture of Hasidism? Singer is a very Zaddik, if he just believed in the efficacy of the Cabbalistic word, I am sure he could make Golem. His stories are Golem enough, they have an amazing life of their own for works of man. We hear too much nowadays about alienation, we forget that its literary masterpieces, even when written by Jews, portray the alienation of the author from an essentially Christian culture. How little the dilemmas of Baudelaire, or Kierkegaard, or Nietzsche, or Sartre—or Heine—mean to a cultured Chinese or Indian! Isaac Singer is an alienated Zaddik, a Hasid who has found Pascal's abyss in the Zohar. The Farewell to the Sabbath, the dance under the new moon, something has blighted them, as something blighted the Mass for Baudelaire. Marc Chagall is jolly by comparison. Perhaps only Soutine, of all the Hasidic artists of modern time, shares so tragic, so abandoned and lost a vision.

Nowadays a lot of people know of the folklore of Hasidism only through the antiseptic anecdotes of Martin Buber. They are beautiful and clean, poignant and infinitely humane—and they might as well have been written by Albert Schweitzer or Rufus Jones. It is the other side of the violent, intense, locked-in life of the Polish ghettos and villages we see in Singer. Buber has "faith"—a typically modern, enlightened faith. For all I know Isaac Singer may be a most devout Jew, but there is no "faith" in his stories and still less Enlightenment. For him, an alienated Rabbi Elimelich, "civilization" really is Gog and Magog. We hear so much about Tradition now. Who knows this Tradition better than Singer? Yet what survives for him, what is "usuable" as the theologians put it, is just the witchcraft and the pain.

Satan in Goray and "Gimpel the Fool" are certainly among the most heart-piercing, penetrating, unforgettable stories ever written either in Yiddish or in America. Although I suppose Singer's plots and characters and milieu could all be called sensational, they are sensational like *Märchen*, like Grimm's Fairy Tales, with the authenticity and closeness to physical reality and the ways of men of a folk tale told in a cottage on a winter night in a village in the backwoods of Poland. It is as though the Baal Shem Tov had seen a vision of Poland in 1940-45 before he ever set out on his travels, and sat down one night by candlelight and told his wife a long grotesque parable, there in his log hut in the Carpathian mountains—and never had gone on his mission. The trouble with all this liberal neo-Hasidism is that it can't really cope with the insights and revelations of our cold, hopeless, sick time. There's a certain complacent Fabian optimism about it. Singer's can. It can even cope with its own disbelief.

Singer has many virtues, a wirey, inescapable style, an intensely personal, inimitable vision, a Machiavellian wit, but above all else it is the bracing, revivifying character of his insight that makes him important. I suppose it is a sort of message, "Life is a bitter tonic, but it cures death itself." I suppose he could be compared to Sam Beckett, or to the Bernanos of *"Sous le Soleil de Satan."* But he is, really, a lot further along the road to the end of night than they are and he starts out from less auspicious and promising origins. Perhaps it is that, so far out along that road which we really, all fooling aside, know we each must travel, his people remain so unkillable, and their comradeship in humanity so inextinguishable, that makes him important. Perhaps that's it. Perhaps that is what makes him so much more indomitable an alienated man than most people, who are only alienated from what we have come to call "Western Europe." Sounds like it should have "Defense Community" added to it, that term, doesn't it?

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

IRVING FELDMAN has previously had verse, as well as critical pieces, in COMMENTARY.

WILLIAM W. BARTLEY, III, Danforth Graduate Fellow in Philosophy at Harvard University, here makes his first contribution.

JOEL CARMICHAEL is a specialist in Arabic and Near Eastern civilization.

ARNOLD M. ROSE is the author of *Sociology: The Study of Human Relations* (1956).

ISRAEL KNOX teaches philosophy at New York University; he is the author of *Rabbi in America*, a biography of Isaac M. Wise.

KENNETH REXROTH, the poet and critic, appears for the first time in COMMENTARY.

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